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THE HEBREW UTOPIA
A STUDY
OF
MESSIANIC PROPHECY

W. F. ADENEY, M.A.



Mr. Forno -

With kindest regards -

May 18/97
R. L.

THE HEBREW UTOPIA.

*Ciò ch' io vedeva mi sembrava un riso
Dell' universo per che mia ebbrezza
Entrava per l' udire e per lo viso.
O gioia ! o ineffabile allegrezza !
O vita intera d' amore e di pace !
O senza brama sicura ricchezza.— DANTE.*

THE HEBREW UTOPIA:

A STUDY

OF

MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

BY

WALTER F. ADENEY, M.A.

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London:

HODDER AND STOUGHTON,

27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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UNWIN BROTHERS, THE GRESHAM PRESS, CHILWORTH AND LONDON

PREFACE.

THERE can be no doubt that many persons have come to be more than dissatisfied with the traditional treatment of Messianic prophecy. They think that the standard works which deal with the subject most thoroughly too often miss their mark through not appreciating the objections they aim at answering ; so that huge dams are thrown up round points of verbal criticism which are really not worth a tithe of the attention they receive, while the most fundamental positions are left open to a flood of perplexing questions. Even when they admit that the drift of these questions is recognised, such persons believe that the methods of exegesis employed in meeting them cannot be relied upon by those who feel them most acutely. Accordingly they

experience a growing distaste for the whole subject of prophecy. The fact is beyond question, and it is on many accounts a matter of regret. The Messianic prophecies are the most powerful and lofty utterances of the Old Testament ; the development of them, and the bearing this has on Christian truth,* are certainly among the most valuable facts in the history of religion ; their practical utility is at least as great as the speculative interest they have a right to claim ; and the neglect of them, I am persuaded, must mean no little loss to our stock of spiritual light and force.

Now it will be the object of the following pages to point out the direction which, I think, an investigation of Messianic prophecy should follow when due account is taken of the difficulties that are being urged against the patristic and scholastic methods of interpretation. The slight texture of the present inquiry makes it quite unnecessary for me to say that I shall not pretend to settle the innumerable vexed questions of textual criticism which bristle up on all sides. I

can only attempt a rapid survey of the wide field with the simple aim of indicating what I believe is the true light in which it should be regarded, and not with the intention of defining and explaining the details of every prediction. Any discussion of verbal points which may arise will only be undertaken with this end in view. Indeed, I cannot state too clearly the humbleness of my design. It will content itself with a rough outline and scattered hints of the subject, without at all attempting to complete the investigation.

In the main there are two points which I wish to illustrate. The first is, that the only fair method of understanding Messianic prophecy is to regard it *historically*, as a phenomenon in the history of Israel, rather than *doctrinally*, as a statement of absolute truth ; to treat it, in the first place, altogether apart from Christian doctrine and New Testament history, as a leading feature of the religion of Israel, the growth of which must be traced side by side with the growth of the nation ; in other words, to look at it in the light of a *Hebrew Utopia*—a Hebrew

picture of the perfect state—though, unlike Sir Thomas More's ideal, which, he naively tells us, "contains many things to be desired rather than expected," this Utopia embodies presages and promises of its ultimate realisation.

The other point which I wish to make clear is that while the difficulties which repel many inquirers at the very threshold of the study of prophecy belong, for the most part, to the concrete form in which it is thrown and the objective relations which it holds with contemporary history, and do not touch the character of its ideal truths, these ideal truths constitute the sum and substance of prophecy—at least, that they are all that is important as a Divine revelation and an introduction to the Christian faith.

WALTER F. ADENEY.

1879.

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INTRODUCTORY.

' This sweet stream of the doctrine did, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still forward to after ages, and by the confluence of more such prophecies grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the gospel in the New Testament, both acted and preached by the great Prophet Himself, whom they foretold to come, and recorded by His apostles and evangelists, and thus united into one river clear as crystal. This doctrine of salvation in the Scripture hath still refreshed the city of God, his Church under the gospel, and still shall do so, till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity.—LEIGHTON.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

UNTIL recently the study of Messianic prophecy was chiefly directed to those features which gave it a leading place among the supernatural evidences of Christianity. The argument from prophecy stood side by side with the argument from miracles, and the two were handled in a similar style. As the supreme interest attached to the bare revelation of supernatural power in the miracles overshadowed all considerations of their primary purpose, so the search for minute coincidences of prediction with fulfilment, as proofs of supernatural prescience, were regarded—practically if not confessedly—as more important than a simple examination of the ideas of prophecy. Too often the only object of the Christian advocate was to gather out of

the various books of the Old Testament a collection of isolated "texts," irrespective of context, date, or contemporary history, and to fit these together into a mosaic picture, the original design of which was previously sketched out by a conscious reference to the narratives and doctrines of the New Testament. Such a method is radically defective. It is inevitable that the idea of the object in view will colour the mind of the inquirer so as to make it impossible for him to carry on a fairly impartial investigation. We are therefore prepared to find that those commentators who have pursued this method most unreservedly have started with the boldest assumptions, and ended by landing themselves in the most glaring absurdities. But even when these extremes are avoided, there can be no doubt that the passion for discovering coincidences, valuable solely as coincidences, must blind our eyes to the inherent worth of the truths concerned, just as too great attention to the rhyme of a poem hinders us from appreciating its thoughts. This method must also lead

to a disproportionate treatment of the several prophecies, often quite reversing their relative order of importance. Minute predictions, exact in unimportant details, like Dutch paintings, no matter how insignificant their substance if only their forms are clearly defined, will necessarily be preferred to those large sweeping pictures of the future in which coming events seem to loom dimly in the distance, because the latter are too vague to afford striking proof of correspondences with the events of later history. They may be the grandest of all the Messianic prophecies—it is not too much to say that they are to be found among the most sublime of all the writings of Scripture — yet we have to see these “visions of the world and all the wonder that would be” thrust into the shade in favour of descriptive scraps, such as a reference to the casting of lots for the garments of our Lord.¹

But a more accurate method of exegesis is now fast gaining ground, and the result is, at first

¹ See Matthew Arnold, “Literature and Dogma” (5th ed.), pp. 111-119.

sight, quite revolutionary. Some of the most famous instances of correspondence between prediction and fulfilment are found to be superficial, if not accidental ; others are discovered to be so doubtful that they must lose all force in the controversy for which they were formerly prized as choice weapons. In one case the coincidence is seen to consist in a merely verbal correspondence, based on a translation which must have been made with more regard for New Testament history than Old Testament grammar ; in another the language points so plainly to contemporary events, that this reference could only be ignored so long as we kept our eyes closed to the facts of ancient history. The immediate effect of this unsettlement on the minds of those who have built their faith on the evidences of miraculous foresight must be a feeling of painful bewilderment. It seems as though the Scriptures were thrown into chaos, and, sadder still, the Christ who once irradiated every page with His glorious presence appears to be retreating out of one region after another,

leaving behind Him only dry, barren tracts of Semitic history, of little interest to any one, except, perhaps, the religious antiquarian. Such a prospect would be dreary indeed! But I am firmly convinced that the apprehensions out of which it arises are entirely groundless. I believe that a correct view of the revolution which is passing over the field of prophetic study will show that it is a change out of which the life and soul of prophecy—all of it which is of supreme worth—will rise with increased power and beauty. Indeed, the dissolution of the mechanical relation between the ideas of prophecy and the facts and doctrines of Christianity is really doing good service to the cause of Christian truth, by directing more attention to these ideas themselves and their deeper vital union with the later revelation. If we are led to attach less value to the agreement between superficial details, we are called to bow before the transcendent majesty of the essential truths contained in the writings of the Old Testament, and thereby induced to inquire into their organic relation to the greater truths of the New

Testament. I do not deny that the mere fact of prediction still has its value. The instances of distinct foresight may be more numerous than the critics in their violent revulsion from the extravagance of the old method are yet prepared to admit. And, if so, due weight must be given to the evidence they afford of a very remarkable kind of inspiration, which must be taken into account before any examination of prophecy can be complete. But the time has gone when we can even desire to regard these as the most important elements of prophecy. Even as evidences for the truth of Christianity the structural unity and organic development of Christian truth should take a higher place than can be claimed by any arguments of an external character. For while the famous argument from miracles is chiefly used as an evidence of supernatural power, and the old argument from prophecy is adduced as a proof of supernatural knowledge, the internal evidence supplied by the harmonious truthfulness and the sublime spirituality of the whole body of revelation, testifies directly to the

Divine presence, and this, not only by compelling a cold logical consent, but in a way which should satisfy all the demands of reason, imagination, and conscience. This holds good even while the miraculous evidence of prophecy is accepted in its strongest form. But there can be no doubt that the whimsical ideas of many Christian apologists have repelled rather than attracted those people who instinctively revolt against a style of argument which would not hold its ground for a moment in the laboratory or even at the bar. It is well for the cause of Christian truth that her defenders should be shamed out of the unjustifiable task of toiling at useless outworks even when the deliverance comes in part through the sarcasms of opponents.

It is a mistake, however, to treat the prophecies of the Old Testament as though they were only valuable to us on account of the confirmation they give to the teaching of the New Testament, even when we do look for this confirmation rather in the deeper harmony of truth

than in the superficial coincidence of prediction and fulfilment. These prophecies are valuable in themselves on account of the great ideas they contain ; they are valuable when read in connection with contemporary events, as affording the grandest manifestation of "God in history ;" and they are also of supreme value when regarded as containing the elements out of which we can trace the development of the great "Christ-idea." Now that the historical method is being applied to physical science and sociology as a new engine for unearthing the secrets of mind and nature, we are beginning to see the great advantage of regarding religious subjects in the same manner. The study of the evolution of theological truths cannot be less profitable than that of material organisms. Nor should it be considered incompatible with a devout faith in the Divine character of the sources of these spiritual truths any more than the pursuit of the same method of inquiry in the fields of nature should be regarded as a proof of want of faith in the power and wisdom of the Creator.

Therefore, without neglecting the evidential character of the Messianic prophecies, we are called upon to merge this in the larger method of interpretation by which we seek to discover the germs of the highest revelation, and to follow them as they grow up into the great thought of the ideal Christ, and then fulfil themselves in the still greater facts of the life of the real Christ of Nazareth and of Calvary, because this larger method will help us better to appreciate the prophecies themselves and also better to understand the grand truths of Christianity.

NOTES OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

*He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth,
will proceed by loving his own Sect or Church better than
Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.—*

COLERIDGE.

II.

NOTES OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

WHAT are the notes of Messianic prophecy? How may we know whether a certain prophecy is truly Messianic? Before we can enter upon an investigation of this element of prophecy, we are asked to determine whether anything of the kind exists, and if so, where? and to what extent? There are readers of the Bible who think they see the clearest allusions to our Lord inscribed on every feature of the Old Testament history and religion. If they mean that the spiritual presence of Christ pervades the atmosphere of the Hebrew Scriptures, and that the great root-truths of Christianity are to be found in the earlier religion in more or less imperfection and obscurity; or if they maintain that all the chief ideas of the Old Testa-

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ment, when carried up to perfection, must find their end in Christ, as every line of the pyramid points to the apex—they are asserting no more than any consistent believer in Christ, who does not reject the religious ideas of Moses and the prophets, must admit. Truth is one, though it may exist under various forms and in different stages of development. But more than this is meant by imaginative people who look for distinct types and prophecies of Christ in every event of Jewish history, and on every page of the Hebrew Scriptures. For those who thus expect to see our Lord as clearly in the tabernacle at Sinai as among the hills of Galilee, imagine that the doctrines of Christianity are expounded as fully in the ritual of Leviticus as in the arguments of the Epistle to the Romans, and prize the Song of Solomon as an expression of the mystical side of Christianity equal in value to the Gospel of St. John, no study is more fascinating than the pursuit of quaint types and obscure allusions up and down the pages of the Old Testament. But surely no

study can be more idle or more delusive, and none can be more fatal to intellectual honesty. It is based on one huge assumption. You must first grant that Christianity—the Christianity, say, of St. Augustine or Calvin—is lurking secretly in every nook and cranny of the earlier cultus, and then you have only to apply each prophetic saying and typical event to whatever part of the later theology it can be made to fit into, after the least possible straining of the original meaning. Thus, when the life of Samson is represented as a prophetic picture of the life of our Lord, in which Delilah plays the part of the Church, it is evident that such a grotesque reading of the narrative can only result from the previous assumption that it must be intended to symbolize the events of Christian history; and for this assumption there is not the slightest ground beyond the wish to believe in it, and the fatal error that truth can be strengthened by a process which to outsiders bears every appearance of conscious fiction.

But *this* is not the besetting sin of modern criticism. Undoubtedly the drift of thought is now in the very opposite direction. The tendency is not merely to repudiate these absurdities, but to deny the Messianic meaning of those prophecies which have hitherto been regarded as clear and indisputable predictions of Christ.

Hence it has been thought desirable to find some definite tests by which the Messianic character of any prophecy might be determined. Some of the criteria suggested appear to be based upon a false conception of the nature of prophecy. But in the meantime, as much importance has been attached to these tests, they claim to be examined. Of course the form of them will depend on the definition of Messianic prophecy. If this definition is objective—*i.e.*, if it relates to the external application of the prophecy rather than to its internal ideas—the tests must be objective also ; they must be such as will determine what person or what event is referred to. Thus if by Messianic prophecy we mean predictions of our Lord and of Chris-

tianity, the criteria will have to be sought in proofs of intentional allusions to the facts and doctrines of the New Testament.

I. The readiest method employed for this purpose is an appeal to the authority of Christ and the apostles by reference to the quotations of prophecy in the New Testament. But this is open to several objections.

First, it is too narrow. There is no reason to believe that the writers of the New Testament have pointed out all the predictions which they would have called Messianic. On the contrary, there is every reason to conclude that they would have claimed a great number which they did not mention, simply because they had no occasion to refer to them.¹ They never profess to give a list of Messianic prophecies. They only allude to them in a casual and passing way, as they are suggested by the course of events.

Secondly, nevertheless it is too loose. It is not always easy to distinguish between a

¹ *E.g.*, Acts x. 43.

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prophecy which is cited with the authority of its primary signification, and an apt quotation, which is no more than an illustration drawn from the familiar Scriptures of the Old Testament to give force and point to the thoughts with which it is associated. In the same way writers in our own day make extracts from their favourite books and weave them into their own compositions with a new signification which sometimes astonishes the author of them ; and yet this is perfectly legitimate, so long as the quotation is made for a literary and not an argumentative purpose. Why should we refuse this liberty to the writers of the New Testament ? Nothing is more certain than that they take it.

Thirdly, it robs the prophecies of a large part of their practical worth. If the application of them is to be determined by criteria which depend upon the infallibility of the New Testament writers, clearly we must give up the use of them as evidences of the Divine origin of Christianity, or we shall be reasoning in a circle—

determining the Messianic character of the prophecies on the authority of the New Testament, and then establishing the authority of the New Testament by means of their Messianic character. To a Christian the testimony of Christ must be decisive, provided he can be sure that Christ has really borne that testimony, and can be certain that he appreciates the exact point of it, and does not mistake the claim of fulfilment for an interpretation of the simple meaning of a prophecy. But we shall lose much of the value of the Old Testament if we cannot read it by itself, and understand the meaning of it before making any appeal to the authority of the New.

II. A second test which is commonly employed in determining the Messianic character of prophecies consists in the comparison of prediction with fulfilment. Those prophecies which can be readily interpreted in accordance with the events and doctrines of Christianity are regarded as prophetic of these events and doctrines. Those which will not admit this interpreta-

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tion are *ipso facto* set aside as not Messianic. For example, a reader of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah who follows this method will not trouble himself by asking who was the "servant of the Eternal" referred to by the prophet. As the prophecy is evidently applicable to our Lord, he takes for granted that the mere possibility of such an application is a sufficient warrant for making it. Now this method would be quite legitimate if the touches were always so delicate and precise as to form a picture which could not only be recognised at once by the mere fact of resemblance, but recognised as an exclusively individual likeness. It should not be necessary for the artist to inscribe the name of his subject under a portrait; the likeness should speak for itself. But generally the prophecies are not portraits characterised by this distinctness of form. Of course some are more precise than others, but none are photographs; some are mere sketches, many are shadows—often like shadows in a mist. Clearly the vast majority of the prophecies are not

capable of this definite interpretation. For if they were there would be no difficulty with the subject, and all discussion would be uncalled for.¹ Butler was forgetting his habitual moderation when he said, "Prophecy is nothing but the history of events before they come to pass."² No one can pretend that the difference between the historical and the prophetic parts of the Book of Isaiah is simply a difference of tense. It is one of kind. All the differences between the nature and form of prophecy and the nature and form of history are reasons why it is impossible to explain the one by a simple comparison with the other. Moreover, such remarkable repetitions of history are known to have occurred that the very words which describe one event may often be repeated in a narrative of another. Thus the prediction in the Book of Daniel about the "abomination of the desolation" may be used with reference to each of the four invasions by Antiochus Epi-

¹ See Dr. Patrick Fairbairn, "Prophecy," p. 19.

² "Butler's Analogy," part ii. chap. vii. 2.

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phanes, Pompey, Titus, and Omar Calif. In such a case no correspondence with any one of these events will justify us in confining the prophecy to it, or in saying that it was intended to refer to it. It would be possible to hunt up in the vast arcana of Hebrew prophecy predictions which would fit any event from the exodus of Israel to the liberation of Bulgaria, and any character from Pharaoh Rameses to Lord Beaconsfield. Yet what could be more foolish than the attempt?

The great mistake of this method is in the confusion between the meaning of a prophecy and its fulfilment. In his valuable little book on Messianic prophecy, Dr. Riehm enunciates a golden principle of interpretation when he says, "What we do not learn until the period of fulfilment cannot be in the prophecy itself."¹

III. Therefore, regarding the testimony of the New Testament as inapplicable because too narrow, and yet in another way too loose, and rejecting the supposed testimony of history as

¹ "Messianic Prophecy," by Dr. Riehm, p. 6.

illogical, we are brought face to face with that Divine literature of the Hebrews, which is to us "The Old Testament," to search by the light of prophecy alone for the Christ of prophecy. But, as I have said, the inquiry will turn on the meaning we attach to the phrase "Messianic prophecy." This may be used in at least three senses. First, it may stand for that prophecy in which the writer is describing future events which he sees to be in connection with Jesus Christ, either identifying our Lord with the traditionary Messiah, or disregarding the conceptions of his age in a clear vision of the future. Secondly, it may be confined to those writings in which the prophet is simply ascribing certain things to the Messiah of Jewish theology. Thirdly, it may be used to designate those prophecies in which we find "Messianic ideas," although we may not be able to assert that the prophet connected them either with the Jewish Messiah or with the Christ of history. By the expression "Messianic ideas" I do not mean simply ideas about the Messiah, but ideas relating to that great hope of the

26 NOTES OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

future which came to be associated with the king of the future, although it had its own characteristics, as the promise of the age of peace and blessedness.

Now, if we use the phrase "Messianic prophecy" to denote predictions of Jesus Christ, we give an objective signification to it. But if we understand it to refer to prophecies which contain a certain set of ideas, we give it a subjective meaning. I believe that any method of interpretation which starts from considerations connected with the objective relations of Messianic prophecy is radically defective, and must be productive of endless confusion. "All cognition," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "is recognition." We only *know* a thing when we feel its likeness to something experienced before. The prophet who writes about Christ must have some previous ideas of the person whom he wishes to designate before he can point him out. There is no reason for thinking that the prophets saw any more of the future than they have revealed in their utterances. But to affirm that they intended these utterances

to apply to Christ, is to say that they did know more ; it is to assert that they had some separate distinct vision of Jesus Christ to which they attached their prophecies. They must first have foreseen Christ with sufficient clearness for identification ; they could only have spoken their predictions about Him after starting with this distinct foresight. This supposed vision of Jesus Christ is something over and above the vision of truth recorded in the prophecy : this vision of the object of the prophecy as distinct from the prophecy itself, may be, for aught we know, only a figment of the commentators' imagination. For example, the author of the Second Psalm had a glorious vision of an anointed king, the son of God—so much is clear ; but we have no evidence to show that he saw more than he wrote in this psalm ; and yet he must have seen something else, and something far more wonderful, if he identified the object of the vision with Jesus Christ. Again, when Isaiah promises that “a king shall reign in righteousness,” he gives no indication that he knows more than that

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such a king should appear ; and there is not the slightest ground for the assertion that he was able to pierce the future with a far more definite foresight, and connect the prediction with our Lord. We have no evidence that in any case the prophet was able to project himself into the future so as to "see " Jesus Christ individually defined as the object of his inspired utterances. Accordingly it seems to me that the only logical definitions of Messianic prophecy must be those which relate to the simple ideas contained in it. If we accept the second definition to which I have referred, we shall confine the phrase within the limits of the Jewish conception of the person of the Messiah. I believe that a fair consideration of the prophetic writings will show that this conception was not an after-thought of tradition. Undoubtedly it grew up on Jewish soil independently of Christian influences, and before the time of our Lord. The Evangelists allude to it as a prevalent notion, and their testimony is abundantly confirmed by the Targums, the writings of Josephus, and the Talmud ; and I think

we shall see good reason for considering it as a generally accepted hope at the time when many of the prophecies were written. But, on the other hand, there are many prophecies which describe a glorious future like that which is elsewhere associated with the Messiah, although they are not associated with the advent of any person. We could not call these Messianic in the narrow sense of the word. Yet they are the most numerous of the predictions which set forth "the hope of Israel." We cannot even understand the prophecies which concern the person of the Messiah without referring to these. It would be most reasonable and most practically useful for us to take them all together. Therefore I propose to use the term "Messianic prophecy" in the larger sense in the third definition for all those prophecies which contain the great ideas of "the hope of Israel."

One of the most obvious characteristics of Hebrew literature is the exuberant hopefulness which shines out behind the darkest denunciations of judgment and blazes up from the midst

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of the dreariest scenes of desolation. This hopefulness usually takes the form of glowing pictures of the future of Israel or the world generally, which is to be blessed through the prosperity of Israel. More definitely it embodies itself in visions of restoration and ideal perfection. Often the promises of the future are found clustering about the person of some great prophet or king or deliverer ; but this is not invariably the case. They are clothed in a rich variety of forms, but one spirit pervades the whole of them. Pure, lofty, joyous, intense, persistent, these inspired ideas are without parallel in all literature.

We will begin by treating the internal ideas of prophecy as separate and distinct, with no reference to anything more than they themselves contain. Thus we shall dispense with all tests and criteria which must be used for determining an intentional reference to Christ. We need not deny the prevision and prophecy of Christ objectively conceived, neither need we assert anything of the kind. We need only concern ourselves with the Messianic ideas. It is evident that this

simplifies the inquiry immensely. It may be difficult to know to whom the prophet is alluding. It is comparatively easy to know what he is saying. The simple meaning of the language is all we are concerned with when we want to know what prophecies may be considered, in the larger sense of the word, "Messianic."

***CHARACTERISTICS OF MESSIANIC
PROPHECY.***

And oh! it is sweet, in the midst of these soarings into the third heavens of vision, to feel that you are borne upon the words of a man, not upon the wings of an archangel ; to hear ever and anon the frail but faithful voice of humanity making her trust under the shadow of His wings, and her hiding-place in the secret of His tent.—EDWARD IRVING.

III.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

THE considerations set forth in the previous chapter brought us to the conclusion that the true notes of Messianic prophecy are to be found in the ideas which inspire it rather than in the relation of these ideas to facts of history. We are now prepared to take a further step. It will be the object of the present chapter to investigate its characteristics more minutely, and to show that these ideas are not only the features through which it can be most readily approached, but that they are the most valuable element of the prophecy, the main part of it, and the only part which is really important in relation to religious truth.

I. Immediately we begin to search the Old Testament Scriptures for Messianic ideas, we find

that the chief difficulty in discovering and understanding them arises from the great complexity of their environment. They are not kept distinct from other ideas, but they mingle with the broad current of Jewish history and prophecy. A work like Hengstenburg's "Christology" might give the impression that the Messianic prophecies must be clearly separated from the rest of Scripture by certain infallible marks—perhaps because the prophets wrote them all in red ink. But as this does not happen to be the case, we cannot fairly examine the subject if we confine our attention to isolated passages, and treat these like the successive chapters of one distinct book. It is true that a large part of Messianic prophecy comes to us in bold, clear utterances, which may be conveniently extracted and studied by themselves. But it is a great mistake to confine our attention to a series of comments on successive "texts." It is impossible to make a catalogue of Messianic prophecies. On the one hand, the broadest comprehensiveness will omit that large part of prophecy which is

diffused through regions of history and other writings in themselves in no sense Messianic; on the other hand, the strictest exclusiveness will not prevent the admission of foreign elements. Embedded in the narrative of current events as the secret of inspired action, dramatically symbolised by the mysteries of priestly and sacrificial ceremony, suffusing the teaching of practical truth with the flush of Divine hope, flashing out distinctly from the most unexpected quarters and shading off into kindred associations, colouring the religious and social atmosphere of their time, and in turn shaped by the impression of contemporary events, the Messianic ideas are to be found, not merely in the set phrases of isolated texts, but also in organic connection with the history, the laws, and the poetry of the Old Testament generally.

II. Secondly, when we do find Messianic ideas so fully expressed in any writings that these may be justly named "Messianic prophecies," the language is generally poetic, and possesses the chief peculiarities of Hebrew poetry in their

extreme form. One of these peculiarities is **the** freest use of symbolical language. Another is **the** greatest license of hyperbole. The metaphor is gigantic. The imagery is so elaborate as to form complete allegories. It would almost seem that the only limit to the expansion of hyperbole is the measure of the feelings of the poet, not the possibilities of the external world or the sense of natural congruity. This habit of poetic imagination is innate in the Eastern mind, and does not necessarily imply an equivalent greatness of thought. "It may justly be asserted," says Sismondi, "that the greatest characteristic of oriental taste is an abuse of the imagination and of the intellect."¹ Thus the poetry of the Persians and Arabians is a rank tropical wilderness of monstrous imagery. But there is a broad distinction between this literature and the most exuberant poetry of the Bible. The former is next to worthless, and is barren of all great ideas. The *ingens mons* of language labours with a *ridiculus mus* of thought. What is

¹ "Literature of Europe," vol. i. p. 60 (Bohn's Series).

most remarkable in the case of the Hebrew poetry, on the other hand, is that with all this oriental license of language, the poet still seems to be labouring to find utterance to far greater thoughts than can ever be expressed by words. Without doubt the chief value of all other oriental poetry is to be found in the richly embroidered robes of imagery with which it is clothed. It is equally certain that the thoughts of Hebrew prophecy are so great that they often blind the eyes of the reader to a just perception of the beauty of the language. Nothing is more absurd than to maintain that the immense value attached to this prophecy is only due to the influence of big metaphorical phrases which deceive us into a belief in corresponding ideas which never existed in the minds of the prophets themselves.

Nevertheless, this poetic form must be taken into account when we are interpreting the prophecies and come to deal with more than abstract spiritual conceptions. Half the absurdities of prophetic interpretation arise from the endeavour

to explain the literal meaning of great images, struck out in the heat of inspired rapture, by the aid of grammar and dictionary, and in the frigid atmosphere of scholastic theology. No doubt the poetic form is the best means for revealing the ideas of prophecy, as these will be estimated most truly and realised most intensely when they are made to flash upon us from great fiery pictures, instead of being presented in bare hard outlines. But, on the other hand, it is evident that this peculiarity of form must carry with it peculiar difficulties for the comparison of prophecy with the facts of history.

III. In the third place, it is to be noted that prophecy is steeped in the personality of the prophets. The freshness, the profundity, the eternal spiritual truth of the thoughts should prevent any one from accepting the shallow theory that they are simply evolved out of the consciousness of the human writers; but the style of the language and the very form of the ideas are plain proofs that they are moulded by their faculties and deep-dyed with the

colours of the intellectual atmosphere in which they moved.¹ Thus Hosea, the prophet of Divine love, sinks the political in the spiritual, and looks forward to the return of Israel to loyal obedience and love as the central element of future blessedness ; while Isaiah, the statesman and patriot, predicts the golden age of Israel in the reign of an anointed king. The priest Ezekiel anticipates the perfect times in pictures of a purified and magnified temple service. His contemporary Jeremiah, though sharing in the priestly tradition, penetrates beneath the ceremonial to the more human feelings of Divine healing, and predicts the advent of a good shepherd to gather and tend the flock of Israel. In later prophecy we have Malachi on the moral side promising the advent of God Himself for judgment and mercy, and predicting times which shall be glorious, because the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing on its wings ; while Daniel, the cosmopolitan citizen, but still faithful Jew, associates the golden

¹ Riehm, "*Messianic Prophecy*," p. 80.

future age with visions of a supreme world-empire. These differences cannot be attributed entirely to the variety of circumstances, or the changes involved in the development of the great ideas of the hope of Israel during the long ages of prophecy, because they are often contemporaneous. They are plainly due to the differences of mental and moral constitution in the prophets themselves.

IV. But, fourthly, the most remarkable feature of Messianic prophecy in its concrete form is the association of the ideas of prophecy with contemporary history. The prophetic writings of the Old Testament form a running commentary on the historical. They do not simply start from the data of the present—this we might expect in any prophecy—but they appear to be dealing with the events of the future, as though these were in close relation to the present. The distant horizon steadily recedes, but it seems only to move in correspondence with the progress of near events. The prophet gives utterance to his great ideas in a form which suggests

that he connects them not with the distant future, but with times near to his own—with the days of Solomon, of Hezekiah, or of Cyrus, according to the age in which he lived. This undoubted characteristic of prophecy has led to the rejection of the Messianic element altogether by those who now maintain that it is a figment of later tradition foisted into the simple words of poets and statesmen. But such a conclusion goes far beyond the ground on which it is based. We may be compelled to deny any original reference to our Lord on the part of the writer of a prophecy such as would imply a separate vision of Christ as the particular historical personage who is expected to fulfil its promises—a vision going far beyond the expressed thoughts of the prophecy, if a fair comparison of the words of the prophecy with the facts of history lead to the conclusion that the personal allusions are to be found in connection with contemporary events. But our only ground for either affirming or denying the existence of Messianic ideas is to be found in an

examination of the internal characteristics of the prophecy, and this is not touched by our knowledge of the concrete relations in which the prophets clothed them. This is a question of first importance. The whole controversy between negative criticism and belief in Messianic prophecy will ultimately turn upon it. It can no longer be maintained that the references to national and contemporary events, with which the predictions literally teem, are simply brought in for the sake of illustration.¹ Does the admission of this fact destroy the worth of the prophecy? The elder apologists *feared* that it would, and therefore they shut their eyes, and fought against it. Taking them at their word, the negative assailants *assumed* that it would, and having their eyes half open, sang their pæan. I think it may be shown that both were wrong, and that the triumph of unbelief is as vain as the fears of belief.

¹ This fallacy vitiates many of the arguments of Keith's famous work. *Vide* Keith on Prophecy, Introduction, p. 11.

Let us proceed to examine the subject more minutely.

The most popular way out of the difficulty is found in the theory of a "double sense," by means of which it is thought that we may retain the allusions to remote Christian times while admitting the reference to the near future in the very same words. This is often very loosely stated, so that it is difficult to ascertain whether it means that the prophets intended more than one sense to be given to their words, or whether they are regarded as the unconscious instruments in the hands of God for conveying the secondary signification. Let us take the former view first, as the one more commonly held. According to this, it is urged that, in the great mass of Messianic prophecies, the writers have two perfectly distinct though similar subjects in their minds. They do not divide their words between the two, however. The very same phrases serve for both. When they speak of a king they mean two kings—the first, David or Solomon or Hezekiah, as the

case may be, and the second always Christ. When they predict a deliverance, they are thinking of two deliverances—the one from the Egyptian bondage or Babylonian captivity, the other from the slavery of sin. When they describe a golden age, they are thinking of two ages—first, perhaps, the splendid reign of Solomon, and then the far more splendid era of the Messiah. In the 22nd Psalm David is said to be describing himself and also the suffering Messiah. In the 72nd Psalm Solomon is thought to be expressing the characteristics of his own destiny and also those of the triumphant Messiah. The one allusion is understood to be typical of the other, but both are supposed to be referred to in the use of the very same nouns, adjectives, verbs, and prepositions.

Now, I do not deny that there may be some instances in which the prophets intended to refer to more than one object. If the mind of a writer were fully possessed with certain large ideas, it would be quite natural for him to give expression to them in connection with

smaller affairs out of which their final accomplishment seems likely to grow, or which, perhaps, illustrate their essential principle. And then, gathering up the visions of the future on principles of vital connection and resemblance, rather than in order of historical sequence, the prophet might blend a collection of similar events in one grand picture, or treat a whole series as one present event. The one test of the existence of such prophecies, however, is to be found in the original meaning of the words and the prophet's own reference to one or more objects, and not in the mere fact that the phrases admit of such an application. I believe that when we look for the twofold signification in the express language of the prophets, as common honesty requires, and not in the exigency of a twofold fulfilment, which has nothing to do with the question, the instances of this kind of prediction will be found to be extremely rare.

Again there are prophecies in which the writers idealize the object of their thoughts, in which they are carried away beyond the recognised facts

to an imaginary picture with which the conception of these facts is expanded and refined, so that a larger, brighter halo of ideal glory fills the heavens around the crown of real glory, just as to Isaiah the courts of the earthly house of God seemed to melt into the larger precincts of the heavenly temple.¹ The prophet may not be thinking of any particular person, however, and he may not pretend to indicate any definite realisation of his ideal: he simply reviews the dream-picture, and leaves it, as John left his vision of the celestial city, floating in the air.

Moreover, the greatest prophecies may well suggest to us deeper truths than were intended by the writers. They are pregnant utterances, rich in germ-thoughts, the expansion and full development of which is perfectly legitimate. This characteristic is not peculiar to prophecy. The utterance of any great saying is like the discovery of a lode; the author strikes the seam, he leaves it to succeeding thinkers to

¹ Isaiah vi.

work out the mine. Nay, we are often startled by the unintentional significance of a child's words. But when we seek to evolve new truths out of old sayings we are not justified in giving them as part of the meaning of the earlier utterances. If we do this with a prophecy, we are building our own reasoning upon the foundation of the prophecy, not interpreting the prophecy itself; and though this may be a most interesting study, we have no right to claim the authority of the author for our conclusions, or to pretend that these are really any part of the prophecy itself.

Therefore I hold that if these prophecies manifestly point to contemporary persons and transactions, the true interpretation is that which recognises this reference as the sole explanation of the prophets' words. If the prophets were thinking of Solomon or of Cyrus, to Cyrus or to Solomon the description in the prophecies must be applied; and this not mystically, allegorically, or typically, but simply and directly. If they predicted the coming of the perfect days simul-

taneously with the return from Babylon, they meant right honestly what they said, just as the early Christians taught that the end of the world was involved in the expected destruction of Jerusalem.¹

But there is another form of the doctrine of a "double sense" in prophecy. The prophet is not required to give more than one meaning to his words, but a secondary and higher signification is supposed to be infused into them by the influence of Divine inspiration. Dr. Arnold of Rugby adopted this theory, and urged it with characteristic clearness and energy in his famous Sermons on Prophecy. "It is not consistent," he says, "to interpret the same prophecy partly historically and partly spiritually ; to say that in one verse David is spoken of and in another Christ ; that Jerusalem here means the literal city in Palestine and there signifies heaven ; that Israel in one place signifies the historical people of the Israelites and in another place the people of God,

¹ See Oehler, art. *Weissagung*, in Herzog's "Real-Encyclopädie," vol. xvii. p. 655.

whether Jews or Gentiles. It is absolutely foolish, and is manifestly a mere accommodation of the prophetical scriptures to certain previously conceived notions of our own."¹

Accordingly Dr. Arnold admitted the plain and literal meaning of the words, but he saw another lying beneath, and he held not only that there may be two senses in a prophecy, but that from the very nature of inspiration there must always be two. "Every prophecy," he says, "has, according to the very definition of the word, a double sense ; it has, if I may venture so to speak, two authors, the one human, the other Divine." Possibly the human writer may have some inkling of the Divine intention ; it may be given him to see far into it. But this is not necessary, and in some cases he may not have the least notion of the second and deeper signification of his utterance.

The advocates of this theory have been charged with dishonesty ; but most unfairly. It

¹ Dr. Arnold, "Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy," p. 41.

is said that such a method would not be tolerated for a moment in the interpretation of any writings not contained within the covers of the Bible. Such an objection is not pertinent, inasmuch as the hypothesis in question assumes a peculiarity of authorship for the Bible which is denied to all other books. Wolfe asks, "How could such portions form part of a revelation, when, after we have ascertained their meaning, we are still left as ignorant as ever as to their import, since under these words another deeper meaning lies hidden?" A valid objection as far as it goes; but he adds, "There may be a third, a fourth, or a fifth meaning, or, as Rollius maintains, seventy meanings, lurking still deeper under the words." This objection will not apply to Dr. Arnold's theory. It holds good against the irrational mysticism of those commentators who seem to revel in the search for recondite allusions for the very pleasure of diving after them, and value an interpretation in proportion to its remoteness from the literal meaning of the text. But it does not affect the sober theory of the Sermons on

Prophecy, which is definite and limited to two senses, for the simple reason that it is based upon the assumption of twofold authorship.

Nevertheless the doctrine of twofold authorship involves a peculiar theory of inspiration, which renders it open to assault. Dr. Arnold tells us that this twofold authorship is essential to all true prophecy, and is involved in the very nature of inspiration. Consequently our acceptance of it will depend upon our ideas of inspiration. Dr. Arnold was trying all through his argument to escape from the idea of mechanical inspiration. But does not his manner of presenting the subject suggest a kind of inspiration which must be described as mechanical no less than that which he condemns? He ardently repudiated the conception of the prophets as passive subjects simply played upon from without, like so many musical instruments. Against this he insisted upon the working of the prophets' own minds in free individual thinking. Yet he held that the Divine meaning breathed into their utterances was quite independent of

all this individual thinking. Now, I ask, Is it essential to the idea of mechanical action that the subject of it should be in all respects passive? Surely all that we mean is that this subject is not mentally active in relation to the particular action to which reference is made. The subject may be a passive stone or an active man, but in either case the treatment will be equally mechanical so long as it is not affected by the conscious thought and effort of the subject, just as the force which draws the living passengers in a train is as mechanical as that which draws their lifeless luggage. The true distinction between mechanical and spiritual inspiration is not that in the one the mind is held in a cataleptic trance, while in the other it is awake and active, but only alive to ideas which are quite distinct from the ideas of the inspiration. On the contrary, in both these instances the influence is mechanical, and I cannot see that it is in the least degree less mechanical in the latter than in the former. To my mind the real difference is this: mechanical inspiration is an in-

fluence which works apart from any mental co-operation of the human mind in originating the inspired ideas, while spiritual inspiration is an influence which enters into the being of the prophet himself, strengthening his spiritual faculties and opening his eyes to visions of the deep things of God. And therefore the prophet who, according to Dr. Arnold's theory, may be in himself more than a passive instrument, and even in the act of prophesying may be consciously and voluntarily determining his utterances, must still be regarded as under the influence of a purely mechanical inspiration, if the Divine thoughts of his prophecy are instilled into it as a secondary meaning, neither intended nor necessarily understood by him. We have no evidence in the testimony of the prophets themselves to incline us to admit this view of Divine influence, for they repeatedly assert their open-eyed vision of truth, and represent the spirit of prophecy as an impulse consciously felt. By reference to this voluntary control over the utterances of prophecy which involves a consciousness of

the inspired ideas, St. Paul distinguishes between true prophecy and the impulses of the heathen pythonesses and sibyls. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."¹

Of course, if we believe in inspiration at all, we must concede that God has His own purposes in it, and certainly does not communicate all of these to any prophet. Seeing the end from the beginning, He will know all the ideas that subsequent generations will attach to a prophecy, and all the effects it will ever produce. The same applies to every Divine action. All things have their relations with infinitude, and only the infinite mind can grasp the sum of them. Therefore it may be said that, as history is governed by providence, each event has a significance to God, who sees the whole wave of consequences spreading out to infinitude, quite distinct from the significance of the event as seen by limited human vision. On a bare theory of theism it must be admitted that God would

¹ See also Dean Stanley, Commentary on 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

see more in a prophecy taken together with the subsequent history of it than the prophet could understand in it, and if a Divine influence be recognised in any form, from a general providential control up to a special, supernatural revelation, it may be said that God intended to originate ideas which men in later ages were led to associate with a prophecy, and therefore, in a sense, saw these ideas in the prophecy.

It seems, however, to be a law of providence that most prophecies should have more than one fulfilment. Lord Bacon says : "Divine prophecies, being of the nature of their Author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, are therefore not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishments, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age."¹ In these pregnant words I think we may see the key to the question before us. It is very difficult to accept any theory of a twofold sense in the words of a prophecy without falling into some unhappy confusion of thought. But

¹ Bacon, "Advancement of Learning," Second Book, iii. 2.

we can well understand a twofold accomplishment. We can readily believe that the way in which God fulfils a prophetic promise may be very different from that in which the prophet anticipates the realisation of it. We may have often good reason to suppose that an inspired prediction may have a twofold intention—the intention of the human writer and the larger intention of the inspiring Spirit. In this case we do not ascribe more than one meaning to the prophecy itself. We read no double sense into the words. The very same ideas which are present in the mind of the prophet are just the true ideas of the prophecy, no more and no less. It is the concrete embodiment of these ideas in the picture which anticipates their realisation which may not exactly correspond to the Divine intention. This may appear to some to be a very destructive admission ; but it is virtually implied in the common statement that it was not given to the prophets to foresee the time and manner of the accomplishment of their true visions of the future.

Still, it may be asked, If we concede so much, how can we pretend to preserve the Messianic character of the prophecies? I have already referred to the logical distinction between the ideal and historical characteristics of prophecy. "In the prophetic foresight," says Dr. Riehm, "we have to distinguish between two different elements. The one is more ideal and general, the other is of a more concrete, historical nature."¹ The first element is not necessarily general: it may be minutely particular. Nor is it always ideal in the sense of that which is perfect: in some prophecies it refers to what is limited and imperfect. But it is an element of thoughts and internal conceptions; it is concerned with ideas, and not with the concrete events in time and space in which those ideas are realised. This, therefore, is quite distinct from the element in the prophecy which relates to those external transactions in which the prophet expects to see his ideas transmuted into facts. We may see these two elements in the

¹ Riehm, "*Messianic Prophecy*," p. 89.

Messianic prophecies. First, we have the Messianic ideas proper—great hopes of a golden future, not necessarily general, but often definitely shaped. Secondly, we have the association of these hopes in the mind of the prophet with certain times and persons and circumstances, in connection with which he anticipates the fulfilment of them. Not only are these two elements distinct, but we may now go further, and say that the first is the only one of real value. It is of little consequence for us to know whether the prophet believed that his visions would be fulfilled by this man rather than by that, or in one age rather than in another. This is simply a question for antiquaries. The one matter of consequence to us is to determine what truths he saw and what hopes he cherished. We are not sure that in all cases the prophet did associate his prediction with any particular person and time. Often the prophecies appear to point into the future generally, and nothing more may be imagined by the prophet than that his hopes will be realised at some time and in

some way, though when and how he does not pretend to surmise. If the prophet were to limit the ideas and spiritual meaning of his utterances to what he knew of the persons with whom he connects them, the admission of such allusions to contemporaries would be fatal to the belief that any true prophecy was to be found in the Bible. But the predictions are equally large, whether we think the prophet was expecting them to be realised in his own time or in a later age. There is no question of the greatness of the ideas — ideas so great and original that they cannot be accounted for apart from superhuman inspiration—but only a question of the application which the prophet made of them ; and the ideas can be interpreted and valued by themselves, although the prophet may have exceeded the limits of his spiritual vision when he came to apply them, and shaped his expectations of a speedy fulfilment.

Moreover, there are two important facts relating to this original application of the

Messianic prophecies which must be considered when we are distinguishing the ideal from the historical elements in them.

The first is, that they are prophecies in the strict sense of the word. They are predictions of the future. However near the supposed fulfilment may be, still it does belong to the "days to come." Even when the language is in the form of a description of the present, it cannot be doubted that this is only the effect of the vivid representation of the prophetic visions by which the absent becomes present to the imagination of the seer, or else that it is simply the familiar device of picturesque, dramatic literature. Not only is there no instance in which these exalted ideas are regarded as representing existing realities, but the very prophets who give utterance to them are the sternest censors of their own times. Abhorring flattery, and equally pitiless in exposing the wickedness of high and low, they were called to deal out scathing rebukes and awful denunciations on their contemporaries, and to reserve their hopes and

promises for better days. Thus their utterances are everywhere marked by the sharpest contrasts. The prophets are pessimists in their views of the present. They are optimists in their visions of the future.

The second fact to which I refer is that, though the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies may often have been anticipated by the prophets in connection with approaching events, this fulfilment was never recognised by any one as an accomplished fact after those events had appeared. The prophets may have looked for the realisation of their hopes in the near future ; but when this near future became present, no one professed to see that realisation. There have been many instances of a partial satisfaction, as in the return from the captivity and the rejoicings over the new temple, but these only served to bring, in the end, a keener feeling of disappointment. They are the exceptions which prove the rule. If the prophets, looking forward, identified their hopes with the rising influence of some great man of their day, subsequent historians,

looking back, never admitted that they were realised by this great man. The prophets must often have read the writings of their predecessors ; yet it is a most significant fact that in no one instance does the later prophet confirm the anticipations of the earlier in these respects. He simply accepts the *ideas* of older writings, and makes a new application of them on his own account, or else he enlarges them in a general way without pretending to see the time and the person in which they will be realised.

Mr. Greg objects to the claims of prophecy on this ground. "A deliverer," he says, "was hoped for, expected, prophesied in the time of Jewish misery (and Cyrus was perhaps the first referred to), but as no one appeared who did what the Messiah according to prophecy should do, they (the Jews) went on degrading each successive conqueror and hero from the Messianic dignity," &c.¹ Well, suppose we grant this, still the remarkable thing about it all is the undoubted fact that the Jews had such hopes, and that

¹ "Creeds of Christendom," third edition, vol. i. p. 89.

these hopes were not drowned in the successive disappointments which overtook them, but, on the contrary, continued to grow larger and deeper and brighter. Mr. Greg thinks that the disappointments destroy the value of the hopes. To my mind these disappointments enhance their value. If they had been satisfied there would have been an end to the whole matter. If they had perished in failure the ignominious conclusion would have made the sanguine and boastful beginning ridiculous. But when we see them tested in the cruel fires of experience, and coming out of each successive trial like purified silver, what are we to say to them? Mr. Greg asks how can we believe in these hopes after so many failures? Would not it be wiser to ask, How can we help believing in them after so many survivals? They seem to bear a charmed life. The dazzling prosperity of the reign of Solomon does not stifle them with satisfaction. The miseries of the captivity cannot extinguish them in despair. Fluctuating at times, on the whole they continue to grow in fulness, in intensity, in brilliancy,

through all the vicissitudes of the ages. In a word, the really significant thing about the predictions themselves is not that the prophets expected certain wonderful things to happen under particular circumstances—say, in the reign of Hezekiah, or under the suzerainty of Cyrus—but that they expected them to happen at all. And the truly remarkable inferences to be drawn from the disappointment of these hopes are, first, that they were so large that no ordinary form of prosperity could ever satisfy them, and, secondly, that they were so persistent that the prophets never lowered them to fit their supposed accomplishment nor lost faith in them in the face of failure, but, on the contrary, continued still to develop their ideas while the people generally came to live more and more in the light of them.

VI. These conclusions with respect to the mutual relations and comparative value of the ideal and historical elements of Messianic prophecy may be confirmed by a consideration of those anticipations of future history which are called, in the language of technical theology,

"types."¹ Accidental types—types where the resemblance to what is called the "antitype" is purely adventitious—of course, can only be of use as illustrations. Thus the typical significance of the scarlet colour of Rahab's cord, or the typical significance of the three days of Jonah's imprisonment, cannot be supposed to contain any mysterious intentional relation to their antitypes. They can only be regarded as popular allegorical symbols. But a true type is a concrete prophecy. It is some event in which we see the principle of a larger event already at work, though as yet imperfectly manifested.² The same principle applies to the two; and the smaller embodiment of it, which emerges in the first instance, is a genuine foreshadowing of the larger embodiment which must follow whenever an opportunity allows it to be completely realised. Thus the deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery

¹ See "The Typology of Scripture," by Dr. Patrick Fairbairn, vol. i. chap. 4.; also Oehler, art. *Weissagung*, in Herzog's "Real-Encyclopädie," vol. xvii. p. 655.

² See Mark ix. 13; John iii. 14; Rom. v. 14; 1 Cor. x. 4; Gal. iv. 25; Heb. vi. 20; viii. 5; ix. 9; Rev. xi. 8. Horne's "Introduction to Holy Scripture"—on "Types."

in Egypt is a true type of the liberation of mankind from the bondage of sin, because the same principles of Divine power and mercy which were the causes of the former deliverance were also the causes of the latter ; and so the sacrifices of the Mosaic law are true types of the sacrifice of Christ, because the same principles of devotion to death, as the ground of reconciliation with God, were at the root of both. To any one who fully understands and believes the essential principle of any type, this type must be prophetic. The existence of the type confirms the truth of the principle. The imperfection of the type leaves the full manifestation of the principle for some larger future event.

There is, however, a difference between a type and an ordinary prophecy. The prophet anticipates the realisation of his great idea in some event which has yet to come, though he may suppose that this will happen in the near future, and in relation to certain definite circumstances of which he can already take cognizance. But the people who are contemporary with the types see

them as accomplished events, and therefore cannot so easily be mistaken as to their magnitude. They stand in a position analogous to that of the later historians who look back upon the prophecies, and see that they were not fulfilled in the way the prophets expected. If they enter into the grandeur of the ideas involved, they may expect a corresponding grandeur in some future events, and for the very reason that these lower types do realise it. But it cannot be maintained that the great mass of the types which we think we see in the Old Testament were recognised by contemporaries as, in our sense of the expression, typical of Christ. At least there is no shadow of evidence in favour of this. The Jews in the days of Moses or David did not possess the Epistle to the Hebrews as a commentary on the Book of Leviticus, and why should we imagine that they anticipated the ideas of that epistle? Many must have accepted the events which we call types without dreaming of anything more than they could see in those events with their own eyes. To them the Exodus was

a glorious Divine deliverance, and this fact was enough. The sacrifices evidently accomplished their purposed effect ; they did bring visible freedom from the visible consequences of breaches of the law, and what more did they want ? But others saw deeper. They saw the essential ideas underlying these typical events, and yet even they did not picture any particular definite realisation of these ideas, but simply accepted them as eternal verities.¹ Some, however, went still further, and hoped for their full manifestation in the golden future. Now is it not evident that these varieties of thought do not affect the essential value of the type ? Once grant that the type does contain these great ideas, and its typical character is established. So once admit that the Messianic ideas are present in the utterances of the prophets, and the varying degrees of insight into the historical relation of these ideas will not in the least affect the real value of them as pictures of the future. The prophecies may have been predicted of

¹ Psa. xl. 6-8 ; li. 8-15 ; li. 16, 17 ; Isa. i. 10-20.

different persons, of David, Solomon, Hezekiah. They may have been uttered without any common understanding as to their objects. In many cases the prophets may have had no thoughts of the prophecies of their predecessors. Still the real value of their utterances is undiminished, because this resides wholly in their internal and ideal elements. Here we have the substance of Messianic prophecy itself, the rest being only the vesture of it, though a vesture which was essential to contemporary thought, and is essential to our comprehension of its verbal meaning.

THE SOURCES OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

For, indeed, that seems to be the main thing wherein this Holy Spirit differed from that constant spirit and frame of holiness and goodness dwelling in hallowed minds; that it was too quick, potent, and transporting a thing, and was a kind of vital form to that light of Divine reason which they were perpetually possessed of. And, therefore, sometimes it runs out into a foresight or prediction of things to come, though, it may be, those previsions were less understood by the prophet himself. . . . But it did not always spend itself in strains of devotion or dictates of virtue, wisdom, and prudence; and therefore, if I may take leave here to express my conjecture, I should think the ancient Jews called this degree SPIRITUS SANCTUS, not because it flashed from the third person in the Trinity—which I doubt they thought not of in this business—but because of the near affinity and alliance it hath with that spirit of holiness and true goodness that always lodgeth in the breasts of good men.—JOHN SMITH, THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONIST.

IV.

THE SOURCES OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

MESSIANIC prophecy is the flower and crown of all prophecy. It possesses pre-eminently the characteristics of the highest form of prophecy, and it has its own peculiar characteristics. It springs in part from the common origin of all prophecy, and in part from those special causes which have given to it a life and colour of its own. We cannot understand its nature, or trace its development with any clearness, unless we have some knowledge of these sources. I propose, therefore, to inquire first what light is thrown on the question of its origin by a consideration of the fundamental sources of prophecy generally, and, secondly, what further light is contributed by a review of those special influences under which the unique Messianic ideas were moulded.

I. (a) The prophets invariably ascribed their utterances to a Divine influence and described themselves as messengers of the Eternal. The Greek name "prophet,"¹ in its original signification, not meaning "one who predicts," nor "one who speaks in the presence of another," but "one who speaks for another," accurately describes the character which they everywhere claim. It is impossible to think that this claim was not sincere. The prophets were men of the highest character. There is a clear ring of truthfulness in all they say. Dilettanti truthfulness may not be easily distinguished from dilettanti falsehood but earnest truthfulness speaks for itself. These men were incessantly rebuking lies and hypocrisy. They severely condemned "false prophets," by which name they meant not prophets who predicted falsely, but men who made a false profession of being prophets, men who pretended to be speaking under the influence of the Spirit of God when they were

¹ *Προφήτης*. This name is invariably employed in the Septuagint as the equivalent of the Hebrew word נָבִיא, and it also occasionally stands for the more rare Hebrew word רֹאֵה.

only expressing their own thoughts, or were moved by evil spirits. If ever earnest men lived in this world of ours these, terrible Hebrew prophets were such. Real and true to the backbone, often compelled to express the most unpopular doctrines, they did so with a fearless, unhesitating directness, which makes the hypothesis of imposture simply absurd. It is equally difficult to regard them as self-deluded fanatics. In natural ability they were the ablest men of their times, and in training and experience they were the most highly cultured. The greatest of them were statesmen well acquainted with the mysteries of diplomacy, and taking an active part in the politics of their country. Then their claim to a Divine communion is not made casually, or only in certain special cases, but deliberately, solemnly, and repeatedly, and it is embedded in the substance of nearly every prophecy, generally expressed in the solemn, unequivocal words, "Thus saith the Eternal," or, "The word of the Eternal gone forth unto me." It is quite as distinct and positive when the prophets are

evidently calm and self-possessed as it is in the expression of ecstasy, or in the narration of trances and visions. Clearly this was a constant, settled conviction, which lost no force when all exciting influences were over, and it came to be reviewed in the cold light of common day.¹

Moreover, the spirit of prophecy is represented as "the freest possible, coming and going uncalled by man."² The prophets received their call individually. The prophetic order was not hereditary, as in Egypt and early Greece. It was not connected with the priestly office; often it was opposed to this; and when the two offices were united in one individual, as in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the connection was accidental. If the spirit of prophecy came upon a shepherd among his flock, he felt at once a necessity laid upon him to obey.³ When some were diffident,

¹ Num. xii. 6; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Jer. i. 17; Micah iii. 8. See Dr. W. Lee, "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture," fourth edition, pp. 313-321; also Oehler, art. *Weissagung* in Herzog's "Real-Encyclopädie," vol. xvii. pp. 627, 652.

² Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. i. p. 563.

³ Amos vii. 15.

or even averse, to the prophetic vocation, this was almost thrust upon them.¹ Ultimately, it was said, this spirit now conferred only on elect individuals would be the inheritance of the nation.² When the name "prophet" had degenerated into a mere badge of office, under which the relics of its old prestige were prostituted to low, mercenary ends, a true prophet was glad to be able to boast that he did not belong to the professional order;³ and the lay sermons of such men seem to have carried all the more weight because they were free from the pedantry and prejudice of clericalism.

The claim of the prophets to be the messengers of the Eternal is not urged upon us without evidence. It may be tested by the character of the prophecies they uttered. It is in reference to similar claims, when made in later times, that our Lord says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Though the prophets did not directly address themselves to the intellect by methods of logical demonstration, they did

¹ *E.g.*, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. ² Joel ii. 28, 29. ³ Amos vii. 14.

appeal to the conscience—in other words, to the judgment of moral truth on the part of their hearers.¹ Most people reject the pretensions of Mormon prophets and spiritualist mediums, because the social errors of the former and the inane trivialities of the latter condemn them in the presence of such a test as this. Now, morally considered, the prophecies of the Old Testament are confessedly the greatest utterances of antiquity. They breathe a spirit far loftier and purer than the atmosphere of contemporary thought. They contain the deepest truths, which once understood commend themselves to the reason and consciences of all good and wise men, though no wise or good men before ever conceived them. These truths were at least in advance of their own day ; to some of them the world is not yet educated ; but subsequent history has confirmed them more and more. If we really believe in God, is any explanation of this unique phenomenon of Hebrew prophecy more reasonable than that which the prophets

¹ Deut. xiii. 1-5.

themselves give, when they would have us believe that the Spirit in whom we all live and move and have our being, and who works most evidently as the power that makes for righteousness, opened their eyes to the light of heaven, and breathed into their souls the inspiration of Divine truth ?¹

It is a pity that the consideration of the great fact of inspiration has got mixed up with all sorts of questions about the method of inspiration, its form and limitations and varying degrees. The evidence of the presence of the Divine Spirit of prophecy is something like the evidence of the presence of God in nature. To look for indications of the Divine solely in the monstrous and miraculous, implies our failure to see them in the normal and orderly features of nature ; so that the attempt to prove the presence of God in nature only by manifestations of the supernatural is a paradox—it is equivalent to a tacit admission that He is not revealed

¹ See 1 Sam. x. 6, 10 ; 2 Chron. xv. 1 ; Isa. lxi. 1 ; Ezek. xi. 5. Dr. W. Lee, "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture," 4th ed., pp. 131-133.

in the natural. The really great proof of the activity of God in the physical world is not in the rare exhibition of stupendous power, or the occasional occurrence of striking instances of intelligence, but in the manifestation of every action of force, and every form of order, and every movement of life—in the very existence of force and order and life, which are utterly inexplicable in themselves, and drive us back on the assumption of a mind and will lying behind all the moving panorama of phenomena. So it is with the power of God in prophecy. The search for the proofs of inspiration in recondite allusions and strange coincidences has thrown discredit on the grand proof of inspiration, which is written in large characters across every page of the prophetic literature of the Bible. The light and power of the thoughts of prophecy themselves speak for their Divine origin. We know that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written by a great poet, or at any rate by a series of great poets, though we may have no certain testimony to the claims of Homer. There

may be doubts as to whether a certain picture was painted by the "old master" to whom it is ascribed, but if it is really a work of art, there can be no doubt that it must have come from the brain and brush of a great painter. The work of genius proves the mind of genius. So with the quite different characteristics of prophecy. The original, pure, and lofty thoughts of prophecy speak for more than a human creating brain by virtue of their own inherent worth, and altogether apart from any extraneous evidence.

But if this be the case, why is not the inspiration invariably recognised? For two reasons. First, because the defenders of inspiration have directed attention from the great fact of inspiration to their own theories of its form and method, and thus the controversy has raged round the theories to the neglect of the fact itself; and, secondly, because the evidence of inspiration, broad and strong as it is, can only be realised as we have power to receive and appreciate the value of the ideas on which it rests. It is not everybody who can pronounce on the merits

of a work of art. There must be first the good natural eye and then the trained eye of experience. "Spiritual things," says St. Paul, "are spiritually discerned." In the recognition of these there must be first the spiritual mind and then the trained insight of the experience of spiritual truths. In proportion as we enter into the spirit of prophecy, and sympathise with its ideas, we shall appreciate their value and recognise the evidence of their Divine origin. This looks like mysticism, but it is really no more than we all recognise as the necessary method of appreciating poetry and painting, and all works of genius which profess to stand on their own merits.

(b) Nevertheless the admission of the fact of inspiration does not foreclose our inquiry into the sources of prophecy, any more than a belief in the Divine power of creation disposes of the physical problems of the origin of species and the origin of life itself. It is evident that there is a human and natural side to this question, corresponding to those human and natural workings of the minds of the prophets which are not

annihilated because they are inspired. At least this is evident, if we accept any conception of inspiration which will correspond to the known phenomena of prophecy. Of course, if we begin by asserting the Montanist doctrine of inspiration, according to which the natural consciousness of the prophet is entirely suspended while he is rapt in an ecstasy which is nothing short of madness,¹ any further discussion of the human side of prophecy is out of the question. If we admit the milder doctrine of Hengstenberg, who clings to the ecstasy while he repudiates the insanity,² or indeed if we assume any mechanical theory of inspiration, such as would deny all individuality and spontaneity to the prophet, we leave little room for considering the human sources of the prophetic utterances. But there is another way of regarding inspiration, which seems to correspond more closely with the phenomena of

¹ "Defendimus in causa novæ prophetiæ, gratiæ *ectasin*, id est *amentiam* convenire."—"Tertullian *adv. Marcionem*," iv. c. 22.

² Hengstenberg, "Christology of the Old Testament," vol. iv. appendix vi. In the second edition the original statement of this view is considerably modified, but the essential principle of it is retained.

prophecy. We may regard it as an influence which does not simply inflame the lower power of imagination at the expense of the higher power of intelligence, so as only to enable the prophet to see supernatural visions, but which on the contrary raises the whole mental activity to a higher plane—an enlightening and stimulating power, which enables the prophet to see and know what he could not know or see in the lower region of his normal consciousness, while at the same time he retains unfettered his own individuality of thought. I think that a fair consideration of the historical facts of prophecy should convince us that some such conception as this not only is most in harmony with other instances of spiritual influence,¹ but also accounts most fully for these facts. "How," says St. Basil, "can the spirit of wisdom and knowledge deprive any one of his senses? The light cannot produce blindness, but, on the contrary, calls out the natural powers of vision."²

If we regard the prophets as they paint them-

¹ Exod. xxxi. 3; xxxv. 31; John xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22, 23.

² Basil, "Commentary on Isaiah." Introd. c. 5.

selves in their own writings, and as they are described by their national chronicles, it is impossible to think of them as mechanical mouth-pieces of inspiration. Their own mental life is clearly an important factor in their prophecies, as they brood over the thoughts which rise in the depths of their spiritually enlightened consciousness.¹ In the first place, we must remember that they were pre-eminently intellectual men. The possession of the Delphic mania, if it were genuine, would not have required any intellectual co-operation on the part of the possessed. There is no reason why an idiot should not have prophesied as well as a philosopher, if Hebrew prophecy were of a similar order. It is still more significant that the prophets were good men. Their character had evidently much to do with their thoughts. Men of deep conscientiousness and lofty spirituality, they walked with God, and thus they were permitted to enter into the counsels of God. But if prophecy were as com-

¹ See Bertheau, "Die Alttestamentliche Weissagung von Israels Reichsherrlichkeit in seinem Lande," part ii. in "Den Jahrbuch für Deutsch Theologie." 1859. Vol. iv. p. 607.

pletely detached from human influences as it is sometimes described, would it not be more honoured when put in the mouth of a Herod or a Cæsar Borgia than when spoken by a Moses or an Isaiah? Clearly the personality of the prophet had much to do with his work. So also had his training. Most of the prophets were educated in the schools of the prophets.¹ Amos mentions his own case as an exception, and it is a valuable exception, proving that the spiritual influence was not confined to official channels; but the very explanation of it by the prophet as thus exceptional implies the normal association of the gift of prophecy with a regular preparatory education, though of course but a small minority of the men who went through the technical training were ever endowed with the higher spiritual gifts.² From the little we know of these schools it would appear that, in addition to the elements of a general education, by which the ordinary

¹ For proof that the prophets formed a special order, see 2 Kings xxiii. 2; Jer. ii. 26; xiii. 13; xxxii. 32. See also Kuenen, "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," p. 40.

² Amos vii. 14.

"sons of the prophets" were fitted to become the religious teachers of the nation,¹ there were special lines of culture directly pointing towards the mission of those who were subsequently permitted to enjoy the light of Divine revelation. From the instances of Samuel and Elijah, it seemed to have been customary for a prophet to preside over, or at least inspect, the schools, evidently with the intention of transmitting the great prophetic traditions of the order, and assisting in its higher spiritual education.² Music was an im-

¹ Dr. Payne Smith describes the prophets as a sort of irregular clergy. They were not however, as a rule, distributed through the community, but resided in "schools," and even when married and living in their own houses still clustered about these centres, like the resident fellows at an university. They were more like the monks of the middle ages, who were leaders of religious thought, and the learned class in the palmy days of monasticism than the beneficed clergy of our day. The Levites could be more appropriately compared with the parochial clergy. The prophets were more often in the position of nonconformists. It is a remarkable fact that these nonconformist teachers did far more to promote the religious life of Israel than the Levitical clergy, with all the advantages which they derived from the national establishment of the parochial system. See "Prophecy, a Preparation for Christ," by Dean R. Payne Smith, 2nd edit: p. 162.

² Compare 1 Sam. xv. 10-12 with xix. 18-24. See also 2 Kings ii. 1-7.

portant element in this education, the cultivation of which must have been designed to contribute to the emotional and poetic elements of prophecy. Therefore, although the spirit was always breathing where it listed, so that no amount of culture could create the gift, and no lack of culture could exclude it, yet as it *usually* flowed through the channels of a special education, we must expect to see the traces of this education not only cleaving to its outer form through all its stages of development, but mingling with its inner life.

Further, the distinctive titles of the prophets, as they help us to understand the character ascribed to their utterances by their contemporaries, also lead us to the same conclusion. The earliest name is "Roeh"—seer.¹ The ordinary seer appears to have been regarded simply as a man gifted with second-sight in mundane affairs; he does not seem to have been cre-

¹ 1 Sam. ix. 9; 1 Chron. ix. 22; xxvi. 28; xxix. 29; 2 Chron. xvi. 7-10; Isaiah xxx. 10. The expression by which the visions recorded in the *earlier* part of the Old Testament are described is from the same root, *e.g.*, Gen. xlvi. 2.

dited with revelations of religious truth, such as were ascribed to the great messengers of the Eternal. He was called a seer because he could *see into things*; he held a regular professional status, and was consulted by people in all kinds of domestic and business difficulties; but his functions were far below those of the later prophets. A second name, "Chozeh," is also translated "seer" in our Authorised Version, though it is evidently reserved for a higher application, and means not one who has a keen insight into affairs like the common seer, but one who sees visions. The imagination of *these* seers was not however employed in creating a panorama of future history in its natural shape. It was allegorical. Under the influence of an imagination of oriental luxuriance, the ideas of prophecy were clothed in a picturesque garment of metaphor, or even incorporated into the substance of elaborate symbolical visions. But the more general name, the name invariably used in the great literary age of Israel, is "Nabhi"—prophet. Coming from a root which

signifies "to bubble forth," it may have been employed in the first instance with reference to the excited condition of those who, like the Psalmist, could say, "My heart is bubbling up of a good matter."¹ But surely it is unphilosophical to insist upon this etymological explanation of the word to the exclusion of the meaning associated with it by usage. It is as absurd to insinuate that the prophets must have had their reason in some degree affected, because the name by which they were called may have been originally descriptive of "raving," as it is to suggest that a member of the Society of Friends must be a very nervous and excitable person, because the name "Quaker," which is popularly given to him, originated in a notion of quaking. So far had the word travelled from its original meaning, even in very early times, that Aaron was called the "prophet" of Moses, a title which is quite inappropriate in the sense of "raving," and which, if it did not literally correspond to the Greek word *προφήτης*, or spokesman, must have been understood

¹ Psa. xlv. 1.

metaphorically in this sense. If we judge of the word by usage rather than by bare etymology, it is evident that this secondary meaning is the real one always attached to it in the great prophetic era. The prophet was the spokesman of the Eternal. He was at times stirred by a great passion, and generally his thoughts moved in the exalted strain of the grandest poetry. But the prophet, like the true poet, with his "eye in a fine frenzy rolling," was only made the more keen-sighted by the flashes of emotion which burst forth from his ecstatic condition. His intuition was quickened and his reason strengthened by this means, and he was a prophet because he was a poet and a philosopher, though doubtless also because he was something more than both of these put together.¹

¹ רֹחֵה, חֻזָּה, נְבִיָּא—*Roeh*, *Choneh*, and *Nabhi*—Dr. Lee regards the words *Roeh* and *Nabhi* as identical in their application, the former being the archaic and popular name, and the latter the classical name for the official prophet ("Inspiration of Holy Scripture," 4th edition, appendix K, p. 545). It is evident that the one is archaic and the other more modern, and also that the same person has received both names. Thus Samuel was called "*Roeh*" in the earlier references to his life, and "*Nabhi*"

Now it is remarkable that the highest form of prophecy is the most rational ; in other words, it is that in which the mind of the prophet is working most thoroughly in the conscious thinking

by later writers. But this does not prove that the functions denoted by the two names were identical. Surely it would be possible for one who possessed the lower gifts to receive the higher also. The first prophet, Samuel, was visited for just that help which was sought from persons supposed to have "second-sight," but the later prophets, who never received the name "Roeh," never appear to have been resorted to for any such assistance in private business. On the other hand, I venture to differ from Dr. Payne Smith's opinion, that these seers were regarded as simply possessed of natural acumen, or, at the most, supernatural magic. They are clearly distinguished from the wizards and necromancers—the latter were invariably condemned by the better judgment of the community—while the seers received the highest honour (Deut. xviii. 9-21 ; 1 Sam. xxviii. 13). Moreover, we meet with allusions to the high spiritual character of the seers, and the connection between their intuitive knowledge and their relations with the Eternal. Saul visited Samuel simply for the help of the seer's "second-sight," and yet he did so because prompted by a belief in his Divine inspiration. "Behold now, there is in this city a man of God," were the words of Saul's servant (1 Sam. ix. 6). (See Kuenen, "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," p. 84). Dr. Lee regards the name "Choze" as indicating one who occasionally, or for some specific purpose, was chosen to convey a communication from God—one who possessed the prophetic *gift*, but not the prophetic *office*. I think that Dr. Lee fails to make out this distinction of person and function in his historical references. Winer pointed out the characteristic usage of this word when he showed that it belonged to solemn and poetical diction, and thus was to be contrasted with

out of his ideas. John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, thought he could detect the difference between the pseudo-prophetic spirit and the true by this test. The pseudo-prophetic

the more popular and prosaic name "Nabhi." This usage agrees with the natural interpretation of the name as referring to a "vision-seer" and Divine "mystic." (See Winer, "Realwörterbuch," vol. ii. p. 277.)

Kuenen endeavours to trace the word "Nabhi" to a Canaanite origin, and thinks that it was adopted at a time of religious revival, when the excitement resembled the ecstasy of the heathens. "The seer, the man jealous for Javeh's service, shows the enthusiasts the path which they must follow" ("Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," p. 556). This theory is more ingenious than substantial. If, however, it were absolutely established, it would not cast the least shadow on the great prophets of Israel, who stand on their own merits, irrespective of the characters of the first men who were honoured with the same title. These great prophets were certainly not the hysterical enthusiasts of an unwholesome revivalism. It is unfair to attempt to degrade the general character of such men on account of some notorious but rare instances of extravagant conduct on the part of single individuals under peculiarly exciting circumstances, and to infer from such instances that "we have in all this little earnest of sobriety and inspiration, and far too much that reminds us of the fanatics of Eastern countries and of ancient times" (Greg, "Creeds of Christendom," 3rd edition, vol. i. p. 74. See also 1 Sam. xix. 24; 2 Sam. vi. 16, 20; 1 Kings xx. 35-38; Ezek. iv. 4, 6, 8, 12, 15). The fact that the prophets were sometimes treated as madmen (see 2 Kings ix. 11; Jer. xxix. 26), of which Mr. Greg makes so much, has no more weight than the similar accusations urged against the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and against St. Paul when he defended himself before Agrippa and Festus; against

spirit, he said, is seated only in the imaginative powers and those faculties which are inferior to reason, while the true prophetic spirit resides as much in the rational as in the sensitive powers, and never deranges the mind, but informs and enlightens it.² This distinction is borne out by

Columbus by his fellow-countrymen, and against Wesley by the orthodox of his day. It is the common answer of prejudice to originality, and of stupidity to genius. The application of the name "Nabhi" shows that it does not correspond with the Greek word *μάντις*, which, as Mr. Greg truly remarks, led Plato to identify the prophecy of the Mantis with madness. On the contrary, its historical associations justify the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew word נָבִי with the Greek word *προφήτης*, which, according to Liddell and Scott, invariably stands for "one who speaks for another," and especially "one who speaks for God, and so interprets His will to man." (See Gesen., *Thesau.* on נָבִי; Smith, "Dictionary of Bible," art. "Prophet;" Davidson, "Introduction to Old Testament," vol. ii. p. 430; Lee, "Inspiration of Holy Scripture," 4th edition, appendix K, p. 545.) Dr. Lee gives a valuable epitome of the various opinions of biblical critics with reference to the three titles of the prophets.

² He mentions (quoting from the Rabbinical work "De Fundam. Fidelii") four kinds of prophecy: (1) that in which the imagination takes by far the chief part in the form of allegorical images, as in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah; (2) that in which the imagination and reason are equally balanced; (3) that in which the reason is free and is able to strip the images bare to their naked essence; (4) the "Gradus Mosaicus," from which the imaginative element is quite absent and the rational alone is in exercise.

the history of prophecy. In the greatest prophets we meet with the least of the allegorical and vision-element, and the most of the direct and rational utterance of truth.

It seems to me that these considerations of the general sources of prophecy not only point to the conclusion that inspiration was personal and not merely verbal, but show that the private character and history and experience of the prophets had a large share in contributing to the utterances of prophecy, though all these elements were under the spiritual influence which the prophets invariably claim to enjoy — conclusions which harmonise with the belief that the essential worth of prophecy belongs to its subjective and ideal elements.

II. Turning from these general sources of prophecy, we now come to inquire what were the special influences under which the Messianic ideas were moulded. There must be some reason for the fact that they grew up in the soil of Hebrew religious life rather than amongst the Sagas of the North or the Vedas of the East.

What is there in the history of Israel as distinguished from the history of other peoples which made these ideas indigenous to it? What were the *natural* sources of Messianic prophecy? In the main, I think these were four great peculiarities of the Hebrew character and history, viz., faith in God, conscience, patriotism, and the repeated experience of disappointment. These four elements commingle and mutually influence one another. Thus in his most able lectures on "Christianity and Morality,"¹ Dr. Wace points out the connection between the first two, and shows how the thought of God is realised through the conscience rather than through the logical faculty, while in its turn the conscience is enlightened and stimulated by that great thought. Still the four sources are logically distinct.

1. Faith in God is the first source of the Messianic ideas. The Israelite believed that he was personally related to a personal God. I do not mean to affirm that he would have understood the patristic or the scholastic or the modern de-

¹ Boyle Lectures for the years 1874, 1875.

definition of the word "person," any more than that he would have employed the phraseology of the Athanasian Creed in describing his belief. But if he did not define the personality of God, nor so much as use the abstract phrase "personality," neither did he define the personality of man, nor apply the phrase to himself, and yet every page of the Old Testament is a proof that he thought of God, just as he thought of man, as possessing those attributes of a conscious being which we call "personal." Throughout the whole Bible God is invariably described and addressed just as a man is described and addressed, excepting that He is regarded as infinitely greater. Nothing is more foreign to the cast of the Hebrew mind than Mr. Matthew Arnold's abstraction of the "stream of tendencies not ourselves which makes for righteousness." That abstraction is the fruit of subtle analysis. But the Hebrew mind was synthetic, and naturally regarded all things in the concrete. Imaginative people in the earlier stages of civilization invariably personify the ideal. The process may begin, as Mr.

Max Müller shows, in a disease of *language*, but it ends in more than *language*—in a positive belief that the language denotes conscious living beings. It is much more likely that the Jew regarded the “*Wisdom*” of Ecclesiasticus as a person than that he only thought of “*a power*,” whenever he referred to “the Eternal.”

Further, the Israelite believed that God was always present and active in the world. Much has been said of the sharp distinction between the Creator and the universe always maintained in the Old Testament writings; and without doubt the Israelite was raised above that gross pantheism which ignores the will and spiritual character of God, and lands its devotees either in the worship of nature or in practical atheism. But he believed in the higher pantheism, the pantheism which teaches that the will of God is the immediate source of all the powers of nature, and God Himself is present, living and working through everything. He spoke of God enthroned above the heavens; but he never sank to the idea of Paley’s “watchmaker,” who

made the world and left it to itself, or only interfered occasionally by miracle as a *deus ex machina*. The 104th Psalm is a grand proof of the Hebrew faith in the perpetual presence and activity of God in all scenes of life, both physical and human. The national records of Israel are raised out of the class of dry chronicles to the rank of solemn religious works, just because they are inspired with faith in "God in history."

But it is a mistake to put forward the theological dogma of monotheism as the chief characteristic of the religion of Israel. In his best moments the Jew was a monotheist, and spoke of the gods of the heathen as "no gods;"¹ but often he was weak enough to regard them, just as the early Christians regarded the deities of the pagan pantheon, as inferior powers of evil, demons who had the position of infernal deities, but who were to be rejected in favour of the one great God of heaven and earth. His theology was serviceable to him practically,

¹ Psa. cxxxv. 15-17; Jer. x. 2-5.

because it was a necessary condition of his faith. The pious Israelite was not simply an intellectual deist who had attained a higher conception of the Supreme Being than his degraded neighbours; he was a man who "walked with God," and the most wonderful fact in his life was not his theology, but his religion; not his monotheism, but his faith.

This faith in God had a twofold influence on Hebrew thought in the direction of Messianic ideas. First, it led to the conviction that God must eventually triumph over all His enemies; and, secondly, it raised the hope that God would deliver and help and mightily bless His servants. The Israelite believed that "the Eternal" was the one Supreme God, who was ever working out His will through all regions of material nature and human history. But the nations of the earth were living in darkness and antagonism to the will of God, and even Israel was often found rebelling against it; therefore he was constrained to fix his eye on the future for the certain triumph of the true Lord. He believed,

too, that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" and, therefore, though the misery of chastisement cast its gloom on the present, the mercy of God gave the assurance of future redemption.

2. The great development of conscience was a second source of Messianic ideas. We need not stay to discuss the question whether the keen and powerful conscience of Israel was an innate endowment or a product of the religious faith of the nation, for no one can doubt the fact of its existence. It led to a vivid perception of the great laws of right and wrong, and the supreme necessity of righteousness.¹ It produced a bitter feeling of guilt, and a deep humiliation and self-abasement before the Holy God.² It urged the need of atonement and reconciliation, of forgiveness and reformation.³ All these feelings had their influence on the Messianic ideas. First, the Israelite felt the conviction driven home upon him that, how-

¹ Exod. xx. ; Deut. xxviii. ; Prov. xiv. 34, &c.

² *E. g.*, Psa. li. 3-5 ; Isa. i. ; Jer. iii. ; Hosea ix. &c.

³ Lev. xvi. ; Psa. li. 7-19 ; Hosea xiv. &c.

ever insolently evil might raise her head, and however sadly justice might be trampled under foot, in the long run the *right* must triumph. Secondly, in his own person he was conscious of sin and guilt and failure; and therefore he saw that if God took pity on him and delivered him, it must be by granting redemption from spiritual evil, not simply from material adversity. This deep conviction of conscience determined the moral and religious character of the great hope of Israel, more especially in its later stages of development, but in some measure from the very first.

3. The third source of the Messianic ideas which I have mentioned is patriotism. Jewish patriotism has its ugly side in the narrowness, the jealousy, the envy, the cruel hostility with which the Jew too often regarded neighbouring nations, and in these respects it is only an enlarged selfishness.¹ But it has also its generous

¹ Yet the Israelite was less cruel than the heathen, and his cruelty was generally in retaliation for some savage onslaught of his foe. In the prophets we meet with the grandest form of patriotism, the patriotism which desires the good of Israel as a means of blessing all nations. (*E.g.*, Psa. lii.; Isa. lx.)

side. Even when it is a form of selfishness, this is the better for being enlarged selfishness. But within the limits of the national affairs with which it was chiefly concerned it was grandly unselfish. The ideal Israelite identified himself with his people, and his national hopes possessed him with a fervour and a passion greater even than men usually feel with respect to their personal interests.¹ In this respect Mordecai in "Daniel Deronda" is a specimen Israelite.²

Now this patriotism, combined with the other sources of Messianic prophecy, produced a most remarkable and quite unparalleled effect on the national hopes of the Israelite, so that they took the same place in his religion which is given to the hope of personal immortality in the Christian religion. The hopes of personal happiness be-

¹ Psa. cxxxvii.

² With Mordecai, however, Israel is first, the God of Israel second. With the true Jew, "the Eternal" is first and Israel second. Mordecai's religion is damaged by the reflection from the ideas of the artist who created him, and thus the Divine side of it is shadowy and vague. The God of his fathers is the God who chose and honoured and exalted his fathers, rather than the God whom his fathers worshipped.

yond the grave were so rare and so faint among the Hebrews that we may safely say they were practically valueless. But the hopes of the great destiny of the nation were strong and vivid. The dying Christian, fixing his eyes upon the celestial city, and yearning for his own share of the beatific vision, rejoices in the prospect of the immortality and future blessedness of his own soul ; but the dying Israelite looked forward to the grand destiny of his people, and lost his personality in the larger life of the nation, and thus triumphed over death through the thought of the immortality and future blessedness of the collective Israel.¹ This idea of the merging of self in the destiny of the nation is very different from the posthumous immortality of the Positivist. It is not connected with the perpetuation of the influences resulting from a man's private and personal life. As far as the Jew was personally concerned with the future life, it was simply in the immortality of the line of descendants of which he was the ancestor, and in whom his life-

¹ *E.g.*, Gen. xlix.

blood flowed.¹ But his hope was larger ; all personal considerations were lost in vision of the future of the nation, and thus Messianic prophecy was to the Israelite what the hope of heaven is to the Christian. 4

4. A fourth source of Messianic prophecy is to be found in the experience of disappointment. There are three kinds of disappointment. You may fail to get what you expected ; you may get what you expected and discover that you were mistaken in your estimate of it ; or you may not only get what you expected, but find it as good as you supposed, and yet the discipline of character arising out of the very pursuit of it may have such an effect that, when you do attain your end, you find that you have grown beyond the enjoyment of it. All these kinds of disappointments were experienced in the history of Israel, and they resulted in a constant expansion and spiritualising of the earlier hopes. If the people had been satisfied by the accomplishment

¹ The Jews appear to have believed that the germs of all the descendants were present in the body of the ancestor. (See Heb. vii. 10.)

of their earlier desires, the shadowy dream of a golden future might never have grown into the distinct prophecy of the Christ. But whenever they fixed upon some near prospect as the certain promise of all they desired, they found the reality sadly behind the vision, or else the desire of their hearts was not satisfied when the vision was realised, and therefore the vision itself only gave place to a larger hope. Thus Abraham was led to a land of promise, but when he entered it, and measured its length and breadth, he was not satisfied, and the discipline of his pilgrimage made the prize of rich pasturage for which he had started no longer a full satisfaction to him. Then he looked for a *city* whose builder and maker is God.¹ The Israelites escaped from Egypt with a full belief that Canaan would be an earthly paradise, a land flowing with milk and honey, and the vision of this was the highest conception of the imagination of down-trodden slaves. The Book of Judges shows that the land was not without its thorns. The Psalms of

¹ Heb. xi. 10.

David show that even the richest enjoyment of it did not satisfy the more advanced Israelites of his day. Again, when the people first desired a king, they thought that the golden age must come with the majesty of a sovereign and the glitter of a court. They were bitterly disappointed in the later years of Saul's reign. Even David and Solomon did not satisfy them.¹ But the experience of imperfect royalty, and the education it gave, roused the hopes that a perfect king would come in the glorious future. In the humiliation of the captivity the people were brought to greater faith in their God, and hopes of a mighty deliverer. Some fixed their hopes on Cyrus as the God-sent magnanimous hero who would deliver them from all their calamities. The deliverance under Cyrus was effected ; but though in a measure successful, it ended in disappointment. Then the hopes grew more

¹ Ewald points out how the Hebrew monarchy was doomed to failure from the first, because it was founded on an ideal principle which could never be realised. (Ewald's "History of Israel," vol. iv., general summary.) The theocratic kingdom required a perfect Divine king to fitly fill the throne.

spiritual, more solemn, more profound. No earthly possessions, no earthly kingship, no earthly deliverance had given satisfaction ; but through all these deeper wants were opening out and higher aspirations rising, which nothing would now satisfy but the deliverance from sin, the purification of the heart of Israel, the glorious rule of righteousness throughout the whole world, and a fuller presence of God Himself in the midst of His people. Thus one of the last hopes of Israel is that "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings,"¹ because the Eternal whom they sought is to "suddenly come to his temple."²

¹ Mal. iv 2.

² Ibid. iii. 1.

***THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC
PROPHECY, FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO
SAMUEL.***

Dieu seul paroît dans cette Histoire divine : il en est, si je l'ose ainsi dire, le seul Héros ; les Rois et les Conquérans n'y paroissent que comme les ministres de ses volontés. Enfin ces Livres divins tirent le voile de la Providence. Dieu, qui se cache dans les autres événemens rapportés dans nos histoires, paroît à découvert dans ceux-ci : et c'est dans ce Livre seul que nous devons apprendre à lire les histoires que les hommes nous ont laissées—MASSILLON.

V.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY, FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO SAMUEL.

THE germs of the great Messianic ideas are at least as old as the earliest recorded events of history ; and yet we must not expect to find the definite hope of the Jewish Messiah among the primitive traditions of our race, nor even suppose it was conceived by the Jews until they had reached an advanced stage of national and religious development. On the contrary, the ideas are indefinite and impersonal—large vague hopes of the future, too fluid to crystallise about any one hero or form themselves into the mould of any particular event, and general spiritual principles, though principles of such a character that a belief in them carries with it an assurance of their final triumph. They belong to an age when writing was little

practised, if not quite unknown, so that there were no literary prophets to record them in lyrical poems or didactic discourses. Here and there they are preserved for us in the form of distinct predictions, but for the most part they are embedded in concrete events, and therefore we must look for them in the spirit of history as much as in the words of prophecy. This history is an incarnation of Messianic prophecy in so far as it is inspired and moulded by the dawning Messianic ideas. Now there are two characteristics of the primeval history recorded in the Bible which indicate the presence of these ideas.

The first is its religious form. In what are called secular works, in the writings of all historians, from Herodotus to Mr. Freeman, history is looked at from a political or social, a philosophical or literary, point of view. In the Bible it is regarded from a distinctively religious standpoint, and written by men who, if they were inspired at all, were inspired not only to separate the true from the false in tradition, but pre-eminently to see into the spiritual meaning of events

and trace them back to their Divine sources. The result of this insight is a revelation of certain fundamental beliefs lying at the root of the great movements of the heroes of this early history. On the surface of the narrative we read of Divine commands and celestial influences. Beneath the surface we can see that these were not despotic and mechanical. They worked through the faith of the men who were led by them. Noah and Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Joshua are all represented as men who were not only guided by God, but who had such faith in God that this guidance became natural and rational. They journeyed and toiled as they did simply because they believed they were commanded to do so; and yet this very belief was only possible to them because it was built on their earlier and deeper faith in God. Thus their histories are embodiments of their faith, and a right interpretation of their lives will lead us back to a knowledge of their religious beliefs. When we examine these beliefs we see that they are germs of Messianic prophecy. The

supremacy, the unity, the spirituality, the present activity, the righteousness, and the mercy of God, are all recognised. Thus the supreme necessity of righteousness is illustrated by the accounts of the Fall, of the Flood, of the doomed cities, &c.; the certainty that God must triumph over His enemies is shown in these events as well as in the overthrow of Pharaoh and the conquest of Canaan; the blessedness of the service of God is illustrated by the accounts of Enoch, Noah, the patriarchs, and the promises of the law; and the redeeming mercy of God is suggested in the promise to Adam immediately after the Fall, and clearly shown in innumerable incidents down to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the conquests and possession of Canaan.

The second Messianic characteristic of this early history is its hopefulness. Other nations put the golden age in the past, and too often only looked forward to a gloomy prospect of deepening degeneration. The Jews set this glorious time in the future. Their history opens

with a vision of an earthly paradise ; but, once expelled, man is not represented as casting one lingering look of regret back to the Eden bowers of innocence and ignorance. Nowhere in the Bible do we find the least desire to revert to the childhood of the race. Milton's phrase, "Paradise regained," is as contrary to the spirit of Scripture as Rousseau's idyllic dream of the bliss of primitive savagery is contrary to the true picture of savage life with which Sir John Lubbock has made us familiar. With the Jew, the eager anticipations of the fruit of autumn far exceed any sentimental regrets for the faded blossoms of spring ; he regards the mature blessedness of serene age as quite superseding the lost innocence of youth.¹ Later Christian theology has caught the spirit of deep melancholy which is the undertone of all the purer classical literature, from Hesiod downwards, and mourns the Fall as the loss of man's perfect state, but the writers of the Bible never so describe it. Scripture history

¹ Of course the paradise of later Jewish tradition was not this earthly home of happiness recovered, but the bright side of Hades.

almost from the first is hopeful, not regretful ; and, while deploring the degradation of the present, instead of casting wistful looks back to the past, it fixes its eyes steadily on the coming glory of the future. The earthly light of Eden is eclipsed by the celestial light of the new Jerusalem. Such hopefulness is of the very essence of the Messianic prophecy, and, combined with the religious belief of early ages, vaguely foreshadows the fuller hopes of later prophecy. For the hopes embodied in historical events were not properly realised by them : they were counteracted and frustrated, and thus, being still firmly believed, they became more than the articles of a creed — they grew into the ideas of a prophecy. Of the patriarchs in particular—men who were pilgrims and strangers just because they clung to great unsatisfied beliefs—it may be said that their lives were concrete embodiments of the primitive ideas of Messianic prophecy.

Although these vague hopes are diffused through the events of history, there are still

parts of the narrative where they are especially concentrated. It is impossible to trace them out in strict historical order, for two reasons : first, because we cannot fix the chronology of the earlier portions of the Bible ; and secondly, because the ideas themselves do not as yet appear to be united into a tradition sufficiently individual to be capable of consistent development. All that I can attempt here is to note separately the principal indications of the earliest Messianic ideas.

I. *The plural name Elohim.* The oldest Semitic name for God is "El," "The mighty." Another very early name is "Eloah," literally "The fear," and clearly meaning "the God who is feared." In later times the plural of this second word, "Elohim," became the generic name for God. It is needless to say that this change has given rise to a great amount of speculation. Most of the schoolmen of the middle ages—Petrus Lombardus in particular—were of opinion that the plural name of God indicated the Trinity. If their explanation

were correct, of course the name must be put in the forefront of the Old Testament anticipations of Christian ideas. But it is scarcely possible to accept this interpretation if we understand the history of the development of religious truths in the Bible generally. The doctrine of the Trinity appears as about the latest product of primitive Christian theology. It is therefore in the highest degree improbable that such a conception of the Godhead should have been held in the very earliest times. On the other hand, Gesenius's explanation, that the name is an instance of "*pluralis majestatis*"—that the plural form is simply used as a more honourable style for the name of God—is very unsatisfactory, as the idea of the "*pluralis majestatis*" was only invented to solve this very difficulty.¹ Perhaps Herder struck out the right path when he said that the name "*Elohim*," which was originally the designation of the whole pantheon of polytheism, was transferred to the one God of the higher religion.² But his explanation is meagre, be-

¹ Gesenius, *Thesaur. in loc.* אֱלֹהִים

² Herder, *Geist die Hebr. Poësie*, Bd. i. p. 48.

cause it does not give the reason for this use of the old plural name when the plurality of divinities was discarded. Delitzsch goes a step farther when he says that Elohim is He who in one person unites all the fulness divided among the gods of the heathen. Mr. Max Müller has worked out a similar explanation, showing how the patriarchs, moving out of polytheism to the belief in one God, carried with them their faith in a Divine energy corresponding to every work of nature, in the stars of heaven and the fruitful fields of earth, and assigned all this multiplex activity to the one Supreme Will.¹ Thus the revelation of a higher truth which delivered them from the degradations of heathenism did not involve the loss of any of the true ideas of the earlier religions. Though the gods of the old cultus were rejected, the functions of all these gods were retained, and, rising out of the pagan pantheism, clustered about the grander worship of the one God of heaven and earth.² Such a

¹ Stanley's "Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 82.

² This process was reversed in the doctrine of angels of later Jewish theology, in which the Divine attributes were distributed among a whole hierarchy of spirits.

conception of God does not embody any definite Messianic prophecy, and all we can say is that it contains some of the germs out of which the hope grew. Thus it affirms the supremacy and the might of God. It asserts the fulness and variety of the Divine powers. It suggests the probability that God will fulfil Himself in various ways, and therefore opens the door for new dispensations. And it sets off against the lofty exclusiveness of monotheism that variety in the nature of God Himself which prepares the way for any fresh manifestation of divinity.

II. *The Angels.* It has been usual for writers on the subject of Messianic prophecy to include the narratives which refer to the visits of angels among the materials from which to gather the evidences of this prophecy. But it should be remembered that we must not set down our own views of these incidents as their prophetic signification : we must look for this signification in the ideas originally associated with them. There is no reason for believing that they were regarded in primitive times as in-

dicative of the great Christian mysteries, or as prophetic of any future revelation. The most we can say is that these narratives of angels' visits may have prepared the way for the later Jewish expectation of the Messiah as a Divine Being.¹ The visit of the angel of the Eternal is closely associated with the presence of God Himself, as though God came in the angel, or manifested Himself like an angel, or were indeed of the same nature. The angel is frequently called "the Eternal" and "God." Thus three men are said to have come to announce to Abraham the doom of the cities of the plain,² and yet one of them is afterwards named the Eternal,³ and the other two are called angels.⁴ The angel who called to Abraham at the time of the sacrifice of Isaac spoke as the Eternal.⁵ The mysterious being who wrestled with Jacob is more than man, and if in nature an angel, yet still a manifestation of God; for at the

¹ See Psa. ii. and cx.

² Gen. xviii. 2.

³ Ibid. xviii. 13-33.

⁴ Ibid. xix. 1.

⁵ Ibid. xxii. 11, 12, 15, 16.

close Jacob says, "I have seen God face to face."¹

III. *The Protevangelium.* "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."² These words, commonly regarded as the earliest Messianic prophecy, are part of the well-known sentence pronounced against the serpent in the garden of Eden. In order to understand them it is not necessary for us to determine the character of the narrative of the Fall as authentic history, or natural or philosophical myth, for in any case the moral is the same. Kuenen, in his anxiety to minimise the prophetic element, is clearly wrong when he says: "The spiritual interpretation has not the slightest foundation in the narrative. . . . The serpent is a serpent, and nothing more."³ Whether the serpent be

¹ See Gen. xvi. 7, 13; xxvi. 11, 13; xlviii. 15, 16; Exod. iii. 2, 6, 14; Num. xxii. 22, 32, 35; and compare Isa. lxiii. 9 with Exod. xxxiii. 14 *et seq.*

² Gen. iii. 15.

³ "Prophets," &c., p. 376. Dr. Davidson holds that "the writer thought of nothing else than a serpent," yet he rightly contends for the moral element of the narrative, which he regards as

regarded simply as a reptile, or, with Milton, as a reptile incarnation of Satan, or as Satan in reptile form, it is clearly represented as a tempter urging the woman to disobey the Divine command. In other respects the narrative unmistakably refers to spiritual things. The tree of good and evil, the command not to eat of it, the temptation to disobedience, the yielding to that temptation, the consequent shame, the loss of Paradise, the threatened future punishment of Adam and Eve—all these are plainly subjects of moral and religious truth. It is preposterous to say that in the solitary case of the serpent material considerations only are brought before us, and that here we have only a typical instance of the enmity between men and noxious reptiles.¹

If, then, we are to read the prophecy in that spiritual sense which is in harmony with the other ideas set forth in the story of Eden, a philosophical myth. "Introduction to the Old Testament," vol. i. Compare pp. 177, 181.

¹ See Hengstenberg's "Christology of the Old Testament," vol. i. p. 5. Harenich's "Introduction to the Pentateuch," p. 101. Kurtz's "History of the Old Covenant," vol. i. p. 79.

how shall we understand it? We cannot say that it was intended to promise the conflict between Christ and Satan in the temptation, death, and triumph of our Lord, because such an advanced Messianic idea is so unlike all else which we find in the earlier part of the Bible, that we could only accept it if we were necessarily shut up to this interpretation, and, as a matter of fact, no such interpretation would ever have been thought of if theologians had not been tempted to weave their own thoughts into the words of Scripture. The following seems to me to flow naturally out of the words of prophecy. The seed of the woman stands for the descendants of the woman generally. The seed of the serpent is "evil," either typified by the most disgusting and horrible reptiles, or supposed to be incarnate in one of these creatures. These two are in the world side by side, and will continue in it and will come into collision. The evil will not be idle: it will attack the race of men, and men will regard the evil as foreign to themselves—will

meet it as an enemy, will actively resist it. Further, both will suffer ; but in the end the seed of the woman will get the better of the conflict. Whether we take the doubtful verb translated "bruise" in our text to mean "lie in wait for,"¹ or "seize hold of," it clearly describes injury of some sort. Further, the heel must stand for the lower and less vulnerable part, and the head must represent the most vital part. So that the general drift of the passage promises victory over evil, though victory accompanied by suffering from the evil. Now we have here truly Messianic ideas.² The conflict with evil, the assurance of supremacy, the warning that this will not be without loss, the moral character of the whole vision of the future here given—*i.e.*, the fact that the hope is not for bare material prosperity, but for a conquest over evil—are all prominent Messianic ideas.

¹ Kuenen.

² Dr. Davidson sums up the lesson of the whole narrative thus: "Innocence was lost, but the possibility of spirituality attained."—"Introduction to the Old Testament," vol. i. p. 182. There is more than this *possibility*, there is a *promise* which is sufficiently positive and hopeful to take rank among the prophetic utterances of the hope of Israel.

This prediction, standing at the head of Messianic prophecy, well deserves such an honourable position. It is large and comprehensive and far-extending, a vague adumbration of the mighty wonders of later revelation, a swift glance over broad reaches of human history, covering the ground which was subsequently occupied by the details of more minute predictions. In two respects it is more general than later prophecy. First, it contains no promise concerning *one* descendant of the woman who will accomplish this victory.¹ As Christians, we see the hope realised not by the unaided efforts of mankind generally, nor, on the other hand, by the work of Christ apart from the struggles of the whole race, but by the life of Christ in us. This idea, however, cannot be taken as part of the prophecy, though it is necessary to a full understanding of the fulfilment of it. Secondly, there is no reference to any nation or family which should be in any special sense the heirs of the hope. Messi-

¹ This general character of the promise is recognised in the two ancient Targums, in which, nevertheless, it is referred to the days of Messiah.

anic prophecy opens as it closes, with a promise to mankind universally, irrespective of those national distinctions which mark its course through Jewish history, when the benefits to be conferred on the race were often obscured by the vision of the honour to be given to one favoured nation.

IV. *The Patriarchal Blessings.* The blessings promised to the patriarchs, and the blessings pronounced by them, especially when they enjoyed the prophetic insight ascribed to the dying, constitute the most remarkable chain of prophecies connected with the early history of our race. It is interesting to note the succession of these predictions, and to see how they grew more distinct and explicit, more rich and copious, as they came down the ages from the dim antiquity of primeval tradition. According to the narratives in the Book of Genesis, Adam had received a simple promise of dominion over the natural world. After the Fall this was supplemented by the famous promise of conquest over

evil.¹ The separate genealogical records of the race of Cain and the race of Seth seem to be set down in antithesis to show that the Divine blessing was to follow the latter race. With Noah² there is a step in advance, for now we meet the first reference to a "covenant" between God and man. This however is only a promise of deliverance in the midst of nearly universal destruction ; but after the Flood the promise is more full, and a distinct assurance of future favour is given to Noah, not only for his own benefit, but for the good of the whole of his race, though as yet this favour is simply negative : *i.e.*, the Flood is not to be repeated. Subsequently³ the covenant is amplified and sealed by the sign of the rainbow, as "an everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."³ After the story of Noah's drunkenness, and the shameless conduct of Ham, there comes a fresh definition of the prophetic blessing. It had been given to Noah and his family generally ; now it is apportioned more distinctly to the

¹ Gen. iii. 15.² Ibid. vi. 18.³ Ibid. ix. 9-17.

several members of his family. Canaan the son of Ham is degraded to a doom of slavery;¹ Japheth is promised the secular inheritance of large territories and powerful supremacy; but to Shem is reserved the higher blessings of Divine favour.² The story of the tower of Babel may be regarded as a counterfoil to the history of the true hope, as it represents an abortive attempt to realise an unworthy Utopia through direct disobedience to the will of Heaven.

Thus far the narrative is fragmentary, and in one respect like the prehistoric traditions of Greece and Rome. It is impossible to decide how far tribal history is represented in these traditions under the form of the biography of tribal heroes: the same may be said of the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. The first page of more definite

¹ This seems cruelly unjust; but our estimation of this and similar passages must depend upon our views of their historical character. If the names of the patriarchs represent the tribes at whose head they stand, and the events in the lives of the patriarchs are typical specimens of the characteristic conduct of these tribes, the hard lot of the tribe of Canaan may be justly connected with a shameless and obscene character on the part of its members generally.

² Gen. ix. 26.

history opens with the account of the famous migration from Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham, more widely honoured than any other hero of antiquity, revered alike by Jew, by Mohammedan, and by Christian, the friend of God and the father of the faithful, stands on the horizon of history as the first man of whose personality and character we can form any distinct image. In Abraham we see the return from degraded heathenism¹ to the worship of the spiritual God. Simultaneously with the revival of a pure faith there is the awakening of the spirit of prophecy. The promises to this patriarch may be arranged in two groups. The first group evidently embraces the earlier predictions, as it is marked by the use of the primitive name Abram.

No sooner is Abram called to forsake his home than he receives a promise of large blessings.² First, he gets a new definition of the area of the greatest blessing, and Abram and his descendants are specified as peculiarly privileged. Secondly, he has a distinct promise that he

¹ Josh. xxiv. 2.

² Gen. xii. 1-3.

shall found a great nation. Thirdly, he is assured that his own name shall be remembered with lasting honour. Fourthly, he learns that all races of mankind will find their blessedness in this blessing of the patriarch and his family. Thus we read, "Thou shalt be a blessing," and "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."¹

I cannot agree with Kuenen, who thinks that the sole meaning of this passage is that Abram's blessing will become the type and symbol of blessing.² Even if the correct grammatical construction of the text requires this reading of the *words*, still the character of the passage suggests something more than Kuenen's meagre explanation. If we take the words to mean that all nations will regard Abram's blessing as the type of true blessing, of course this is a promise of great honour to Abram and his descendants. But is it not also a promise of good to the nations themselves? For if they acknowledge Abram as most blessed, they must recognise his

¹ Gen. xii. 2, 3. ² Kuenen, "Prophets," &c. p. 379, note.

blessing as the highest kind of blessing, and recognising it, they must seek it as the most desirable of all possessions. In that case we have a promise that the nations will not misunderstand, will not despise this special blessing of Abram, but will set it before them as their own ideal. Therefore, if there is no declaration in the words of the prophecy that a blessing will pass from Abram to other nations, the spirit of it suggests the hope that they will share in similar blessings. But the most natural interpretation of the passage will lead us to take it as declaring that Abraham will not only be the symbol of true blessedness, but its source and channel. It is most natural to read it as saying that by *means of Abraham* all nations will be blessed. If so, it is a most wonderful proof of the broad and catholic spirit of the earliest prophecy.¹

¹ The friendly relations which subsisted between Abram and the aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan, as represented in the whole story of his life—so different from the relations between his descendants and the Canaanites—have been justly noted as a remarkable proof of the antiquity of the narrative. The nations generally are regarded with a liberality which was rare in the days

After Lot had made his selfish choice of the rich plain of Sodom, and Abram was left to the less fertile uplands, he was encouraged by fresh visions of the future assuring him that he should be no loser by his generosity, for though Lot had taken to himself the better possessions in the present, the future was with Abram. He receives a double promise : first, that he shall possess the land over which he now wanders with his flocks and herds, at present no more than a homeless nomad chief ; and, secondly, that his descendants shall be numberless "as the dust of the earth."¹

Subsequently the war with the heathen robber bands gave the patriarch an established position of respect among the tribes of Canaan, and yet, when he returned to his quiet life again, Abram was distressed by his childless loneliness, and the promises seemed farther from fulfilment than

of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and which clearly belongs to a period before the growth of narrow Jewish exclusiveness. The liberality of the prophets is the result of later views which superseded it. See Stanley's "*Lectures on the Jewish Church*," vol. i. p. 40.

¹ Gen. xiii. 14-17.

ever. Then he received a new and definite promise of an heir, and was assured that his race should be countless as the stars which crowd the clear Syrian sky.¹ In all these prophecies the spiritual element of the great hope is scarcely discernible. The thoughts of the patriarch were directed to the eager desire of founding a great nation with rich possessions. Moreover, the pursuit of this end so absorbed the attention of his immediate descendants that the higher ideas were rarely conceived during the succeeding ages, spent first in the nomad life and then in grinding slavery, and finally in travelling and fighting for the possession of the promised land.

The second group of promises made to the great patriarch include those in which the name "Abraham" is substituted for the earlier "Abram." Kuenen considers that these must be dated as late as the time of David, because mention is made of *kings* who should come from Abraham.² Such an assertion is preposterous, as

¹ Gen. xv. 5.

² Ibid. xvii. 6. See Kuenen, "Prophets," &c. p. 379.

if no one could conceive the idea of kingship before the kings of Israel appeared. The two chief characteristics of this group of prophecies are worthy of note. First, the very name "Abraham" is prophetic; "Abram," "high father," becomes "Abraham," "father of a multitude of nations."¹ Secondly, God tells Abraham that he shall beget kings.² In most other respects the promises of this group are similar to those of the earlier group. The birth of a son is a partial fulfilment of the promise which is now to be confined to Isaac and his descendants. After the offering of Isaac the old promise is repeated, with an additional assurance of victory over the enemies of his descendants. The family of Abraham is not only to be multiplied in number like the stars of heaven and the sand which is upon the sea-shore. His seed is also to "possess the gate of his enemy," by which expression it is clearly meant that they will enter the gate and hold it, and so take the city and be master of the inhabitants. It may also mean

¹ Gen. xvii. 5.² Ibid. xvii. 6.

that they will *influence* their enemies, and thus it may vaguely shadow forth the idea suggested by the prediction that the blessedness of Abraham is to be the ideal of the blessedness recognised by all nations.

The great and often repeated promise to Abraham is renewed and confirmed to Isaac.¹ It is repeated again to Jacob, and fixed in the line of his descendants in the dream of the mystic ladder which Jacob dreamed on that same hill of Bethel where Abraham had heard Divine voices, and at the very time when the solitary young man was turning his back on the land of his future possessions, and journeying towards the pagan home of his ancestors.² Before this, Jacob had received a similar blessing from the hands of his father. Now he learns in particular that he will have supremacy over his own brethren, and that other peoples will be blessed if they minister to the prosperity of his race.³

There is an incident in the life of Jacob which

¹ Gen. xxvi. 3-5.

² Ibid. xxviii. 13-15.

³ Ibid. xxvii. 27-29.

may be associated with the group of prophecies in which the name Abraham is used for the great patriarch. For in the account of this the new name "Israel" is used, and we read again of "kings." There is nothing in the character of the incident to forbid our accepting it as a part of the genuine history of Jacob. The supplanter is forgotten in the prince of God, and yet he is made to remember the thoughts of his youth as, once again, an old and weather-beaten pilgrim, he turns his steps to the sacred hill of Bethel, and there hears a renewal of the old promises which had cheered his lonely youth as they had lightened the earlier days of his fathers.¹

The last of the patriarchal blessings is contained in the dying words of Jacob.² Reuben is the first-born, and Joseph his father's favourite, and Jacob gives to the latter the ordinary patriarchal blessing of fruitfulness; but his prophetic insight compels him to single out Judah for peculiar honour.³ How are we to understand

¹ Gen. xxxv. 11, 12.

² Ibid. xlix.

³ Ibid. xlix. 8-12.

the most important part of Judah's destiny? In our English Version it is translated, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." The word ¹ translated "lawgiver" should be rendered "ruler's staff," and then the clause in which it occurs will refer to the staff deposited between the feet of the ruler as he sits on his throne. What are we to make of the famous word "Shiloh"? The later Jewish, the Catholic, and most Protestant commentators until quite recently supposed it to be a name of the Messiah. If used as a personal appellation it might be taken as a form of the name Solomon, or it might be understood to designate "the man of peace." The idea expressed by the passage when thus translated is exceedingly beautiful, and looks like such a clear and remarkable prediction of the Christ, that it is no wonder it has been treasured as one of the gems of prophecy. Yet such an interpretation would only be consistent with a very late date of origin.

¹ *pph.*

We have no other indications that the definite hope of the personal Messiah was ever imagined in those early times, nor indeed for centuries later. To ascribe this idea to Jacob would involve an anachronism contrary to all that we know of the nature of prophecy and the method of gradual development by which God has brought His greatest truths to light. Lange interprets the expression, "until he comes home as the rest-giver;" an explanation which he shows is grammatically admissible, and yet this reading is not the most likely rendering of the text. Everywhere else in the Bible the word Shiloh stands for the well-known city in Ephraim, the city in which the tabernacle was kept during the time of the Judges, and the only other word of analogous form, "Giloh,"¹ is also the name of a place. The most simple reading of the text falls in with this rendering of the word, viz., "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a warrior's mace from between his feet, till he come to Shiloh." Thus we have a prophecy that Judah

¹ Josh. xv. 51 ; 2 Sam. xv. 12.

will be the chief among his brethren, and will retain his leadership until the tribes assemble at Shiloh. Nevertheless, it is far from improbable that Shiloh is mentioned here with an intentional reference to the fact that the name was suggestive of rest, for such a play upon words, instead of being thought unworthy of a solemn composition, was a very common device in Hebrew literature. Therefore there may be a hint in this prophecy that Judah's rough, lion-like pre-eminence would end at the Shiloh of rest in some more peaceful age. But the poetical form of the whole prophecy as a regular lyrical composition is a serious reason for questioning whether the very words which fell from the lips of the patriarch have been preserved to us unaltered. If we picture the scene in which these words were uttered—the feeble man giving his dying benediction to his children—can we imagine that he would observe the rules of poetical composition and work his thoughts into a formal poem? We might as well suppose that Shakespeare's famous speech of the dying Wolsey is a literal

report of the language of the great cardinal. If there has been any alteration of the words it is most likely that this name of Shiloh was supplied from later sources of information, for the sake of adding definiteness to the prophecy.¹ We must therefore be satisfied to take the prophecy in its large and general sense, as describing the great and lasting future of Judah. The converging lines of prophecy begin from this time to indicate some mysterious future honour for Judah.

V. *The Exodus*. The Exodus itself is an embodiment of some of the ideas which enter into the Messianic hope, and in this sense it is a true type, and therefore a prophecy, of a greater deliverance of the people of God. The age of the Exodus does not add much indeed to the promise which the Hebrews received from their fathers ; but it is evident that they carried it with them

¹ Yet we have reason to believe in the antiquity of the tradition of which the ode is just a poetical embodiment. *E.g.*, the severe language with which the character and fate of Levi are described suggests a date prior to the attainment of its influential position by that tribe.

in their migration to Egypt, and did not wholly forget it amidst the toils and degradation of slavery. The escape of Israel from the thralldom of the Pharaohs is narrated in connection with a great religious revival, in which faith in this glorious hope awoke together with new devotion to God and higher thoughts of the Divine nature. The appearance of God to Moses at Horeb is described as the occasion on which His new and higher name of "the Eternal" ¹ was revealed. The great word is often found in various combinations after the account of this event, but before this it only occurs in one or two rare instances, the only one of which that can be considered authentic being the case of his own mother Jochebed, from which the pleasing inference has been drawn that purer notions of the Deity were cherished by the obscure family of Moses in the midst of the general degradation of the bondage, so that they received some foreshadowing of the new revelation before it was clearly known to Israel. In the higher thought

¹ "Javeh." Exod. iii. 14.

of the spiritual God, the Source of Life, "the Living One," the people had fresh ground for confidence in the hope of their ancestors. Then the institution of the passover is an indication that this revival did not stay with the revelation of new truths. It shows there was an awakening of the nation generally to faith and devotion. The passover itself was a symbol of the redeeming mercy of God dependent on obedience and sacrifice. Before the Exodus the people were encouraged with the old promise of a land flowing with milk and honey,¹ and after the great deliverance, while they were encamped before Mount Sinai, the promise was repeated, with an assurance of Divine guidance and protection throughout their journeys in the wilderness,² but conditioned by the duty of fidelity to the Eternal.³

Now and till after the conquest of Canaan the spiritual hopes of Israel are so far overshadowed by the anticipation of this earthly inheritance

¹ Exod. iii. 17.

² Ibid. xxiii. 20-25.

³ Ibid. xxiii. 32, 33.

that very little is added to the Messianic idea, which remains stationary, for the simple reason that it is too much identified with the prospect of the possession of the promised land. But in the large conception of it, as the hope of blessings to come from God, it is always present as the root out of which all the highest efforts of the nation spring.

VI. *The Law.* The religious system embodied in the law of Moses takes an intermediate position between the lower religion of the mass of the people and the higher, more spiritual religion of the prophets. It does not concern itself directly with the great hope of the future. The truths which are contained in it are for the most part those which relate to the details of present duty. Whenever it does refer to the future the prospects of temporal prosperity or adversity are set forth only as dependent on the conduct of the people—only as conditional, only as rewards and punishments. The grand positive promises of victory and glory and wide-spread blessedness, such as the patriarchs had enjoyed,

and such as Isaiah and his peers were to resume and expand, are quite foreign to the spirit of the religion of the law. The law is prophetic, however, in a secondary sense. It is symbolical and typical. The truths of righteousness and judgment, and the ideas of sacrifice and mercy, which it embodies, are but imperfectly fulfilled by that system, and therefore the expression of them in it may suggest the hope of a more complete realisation. But we cannot infer that they were so understood by contemporaries. They are rather unconscious anticipations of higher truths only fully known by means of later revelation. The power and presence of the Eternal, the necessity of righteousness, the guilt of sin, the mystery of atonement by sacrifice, and the forgiving mercy of God, are all leading ideas of the law, which also enter into the perfect Messianic picture. The principle of sacrifice runs through the whole of the law. How far is it prophetic? This is a wide question, and would carry us quite beyond the scope of the present inquiry. I can only hint at one or two points. First, the im-

mediate end of the material sacrifices of the law was to remove the material liabilities of the law. So far they were not prophetic. Secondly, to thoughtful Israelites the real meaning of these sacrifices must have consisted in spiritual acts of obedience and consecration on the part of the worshippers, and in the meaning implied by the nature of the sacrifices themselves—the first-fruits as a token of thankfulness, the whole burnt sacrifice as a sign of complete dedication, and the slaughtered victims of the sin and trespass offerings as an admission that without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin.

It is difficult to see in all the five Books of Moses any indication that these great religious conceptions were thought to need a fuller manifestation, such as is ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ. Yet though it was not recognised at the time, there was that in them which did require the fuller manifestation; and it was by meditating on the insufficiency of these rites and ceremonies that the later prophets came to look forward to a higher embodiment of their essential principles.

VII. *Balaam*. When the wanderings of Israel were drawing to a close, and the people had turned their backs on the wilderness of Sinai and assembled themselves on the steppes of Moab, ready to descend upon the land of promise, they were encouraged by a brilliant prophecy from a most unexpected quarter. In the mysterious East—the natural home of star-reading and magic and supernatural insight—there lived a man whose fame had reached the children of Moab. This man was Balaam, the Moses of the Midianites, like Melchizedec and Job, a believer in the true God, although not one of the Hebrew family. But it is plain that his moral character did not square with his higher convictions ;¹ and it would seem that these convictions were degraded by his permission of the sensual worship of Baal by the side of the purer faith in the holy God of heaven and earth.² Balak king of Moab, in his terror at the invasion of the Hebrew tribes, called in the aid of his famous seer to fight his battle with the

¹ Num. xxii.—xxiv.

² Ibid. xxv.

engine of supernatural curses. But the sight of the wonderful people was the occasion for a mighty inspiration under which the better nature of Balaam awoke, and he prophesied as he had never prophesied before, in words of blessing—the very opposite to the maledictions he was hired to pronounce. As he looked down on the tents of Israel he recognised in the worshippers of the one spiritual God a people destined to a strange and glorious future, dwelling alone and not reckoned among the nations, great and innumerable; and he sighed on his own account for the peaceful life and death of the righteous.¹ The rumour of the great exodus had spread far and wide through the tribes of the desert and among the peoples of Syria, investing the name of Israel with terror to all who came in his way. Balaam in his eastern home had heard the wonderful news, and urged by the enraged king of Moab to make a fresh attempt to curse the Hebrew host, he declared that the same providential power by which this great deliverance

¹ Num. xxiii. 9, 10.

was wrought should still follow the people, and give them victory over all their enemies, making them rich with the fruitfulness of the land of their future abode, and honouring them with such peculiar blessedness that all their friends should share its brightness, and all their foes suffer from its shadow.¹ Every succeeding prophecy became more exalted until Balaam, quite carried out of himself with inspired ecstasy, seemed to gaze down long vistas of the future of this wonderful people to visions of blessing clustering about the advent of a great victorious King, "the star of Jacob."

Now we are asked, Is this a Messianic prophecy? Those who judge of prophecy by its historical references are divided in opinion about it. Some see in the allusion to the "star" a distinct prediction of Christ. Others think it is a prophecy of David, who wielded the sceptre of Israel and subdued the Moabites,² and others again deny any such precise application. I have endeavoured to show that in the case of a genuine

¹ Num. xxiv. 4-9.

² 2 Sam. viii. 2.

prophecy, *i.e.*, of a prophecy written before the event, we have no ground for assuming that the prophets had any vision of the object of the prophecy beyond that which is embodied in the prophecy itself—except, of course, when the object was already known by experience—so that it is a mistake to ask, “*Who is referred to?*” because there is no reference to any more definite conception of a person than that which is included in the very words of the prophecy. But if we simply look at the prophecy before us, we can dispense with all these questions and pronounce upon its Messianic character at once, on the ground of the ideas which it contains. These are most decidedly Messianic. The old promise is repeated and amplified. The glory of Israel is pictured in glowing colours as peculiar and solitary, and yet as a means of conferring blessing on other nations.¹ But the special feature of this prophecy is the declaration that the future blessings will be accomplished through the influence of one great personage.² We have seen

¹ Num. xxiv. 10.

² Ibid. xxiv. 17.

that reference was made to future "*kings*" in the two groups of patriarchal prophecies in which the names Abraham and Israel are employed. Here we have a prophecy of one great king. It is absurd to say that such a prophecy could not have been uttered before the time of the monarchy. As a prophecy it is a recognition of a great truth—the truth that the coming glory will be brought about through the advent of some one hero. This is the personal element of the great hope of Israel, and we recognise it for the first time in the prophecy of Balaam.

VIII. *The Coming Prophet.* The prediction of a coming prophet, which the author of the Book of Deuteronomy describes as having been spoken by Moses, marks a great forward step in the hopes of Israel. Moses is about to be taken from the head of the people, but he promises that "the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thy brethren like unto me."¹ Of course the controversy about the date of the Book of Deuteronomy involves the

¹ Deut. xviii. 18.

question of the date of this utterance. As Kuenen thinks the reference to kings in Genesis must have been made after there were kings in Israel, so he holds that the reference to prophets must have been made after the commencement of the great prophetic era. But this is not only to repudiate the possibility of inspired foresight, but to deny the writers of the Bible the power of imagining anything which was not accomplished in their time — not only to reject inspiration, but to ignore all originality of thought. If the last redaction of the Book of Deuteronomy is as old as the latest date assigned to it, it was certainly formed on much earlier documents, and there is no reason for denying the traditional antiquity of this great prophecy on that account. Anyhow, the prediction itself is remarkable, apart from the circumstances under which it was uttered. It may not be intended to denote one particular prophet, but only the prophetic order, and the tests by which to discover a true prophet in the other parts of the chapter favour this view. And yet it is a promise that in the future Moses

himself will be equalled. Moreover, the prophecy is of great value, because it directs attention to the vital connection between the spiritual work of the prophet and the future prosperity of Israel. Here we see a revival of the moral element of Messianic prophecy which had fallen into the background, while the material prosperity of Israel was being most vividly depicted. The people are now directed to look into the future, not only with hopes of national glory, but with hopes of spiritual blessings. The golden future is the time when truth and Divine enlightenment shall flourish. This was in part realised in the great days of the Hebrew prophets. But as none of these men could claim to equal Moses, in later times this prediction rightly took its place amongst the Messianic prophecies, as a promise which was yet to be accomplished in the coming days of Israel's perfection.

IX. It would be impossible to find in all history a more remarkable instance of national revival than that which is given to us in the story of the Exodus. In spite of occasional outbreaks of

discontent and lapses into idolatry or immorality, the fugitive slaves after their baptism in the Red Sea and temptation in the wilderness steadily set before themselves the noblest ideal of a national life. They lived under a theocracy, depending on the immediate guidance of the Eternal, and nourished by ever-brightening hopes of future greatness. But this grand Mosaic age was succeeded by a long time of deep gloom and degradation and disappointment. The sudden brilliant victories of Joshua did not end in permanent conquest; they were *raids* in which the brave tribes from the desert swept over the territories of the Canaanites, but often the invaders were compelled to retreat to the hill country, and their final peaceful settlement in the agricultural districts was almost as long in being accomplished as the Saxon settlement in Britain. The Israelites themselves lost the union which common tasks and common dangers had cemented during their nomadic life in the wilderness. The very greatness of their ideal tended to this end. When Joshua had quieted the opposition of the

aboriginal races, like another Cincinnatus he resigned his dictatorship, retired to his estate, and concerned himself almost exclusively with the affairs of his own tribe of Ephraim. No one assumed the supreme rank of king. Gideon, the greatest of all the Judges, declined the offer of it, because the Eternal was the true king of the people. There was a national assembly of the tribes meeting at Shiloh which, like the Greek territory of Delphi, was neutral ground, and the greatest influence rested with the high priests excepting in the time of emergency, when a military dictator was chosen and acknowledged, but only for the temporary need. Unable to live up to the idea of unseen kingship, the national unity began to dissolve under the influence of tribal jealousies. Worse than all else, under the cloak of a higher civilization, immoral heathen customs crept in and corrupted the simple habits of the Hebrew people, who were destined to greatness only so long as they dared to be isolated.

How did this retrogression effect the development of the great hope? Military heroes were

plentiful, but the prophets were few and feeble, and "the word of the Eternal was rare in those days."¹ The Messianic ideas were almost forgotten by the people generally: certainly little was added to them. Nevertheless, the dark age of the Judges had a most important influence upon the highest hopes of Israel. Hidden in the breast of the faithful, they were being purified by disappointment. The land flowing with milk and honey was discovered to be also a land of thorns and briars. The defect of the earlier hopes had been in the tendency to dwell exclusively on the happiness of the possession of Canaan, and now that this illusion was painfully dissolving, the people were being prepared to look for some larger meaning in their old hopes, if they were still to cling to them. Thus we may connect the degradation of the age of the Judges with the wonderful elevation of the Messianic ideas which followed the next great religious revival, and gave a new set to the current of prophecy.

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 1.

*THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC
PROPHECY, FROM SAMUEL TO
THE CAPTIVITY.*

*We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curl'd
In serpent-twine about God's seat :
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.*

*And in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.*

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

VI.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY, FROM SAMUEL TO THE CAPTIVITY.

THE second age of the development of the ancient hope of Israel, opening with the life of Samuel and closing with the Babylonian captivity, is rightly called the Augustan era of Hebrew literature. It is the time in which the great prophetic order rose and flourished. We shall no longer have to grope for the Messianic ideas among isolated phrases and historical narratives; they are now to be found distinctly set forth in written discourses, and expanding into most glorious pictures of the future, which claim a very prominent position in the history of Israel. Instead of being contented with the patriarchal promise of a numerous race and fertile possessions, the pro-

phesies become more political, and point forward to a grand national supremacy. But higher thoughts enter into the new visions. They now become more spiritual, promising a golden era of universal peace and brotherhood, though this prospect is closely connected with the political history of Israel, and even associated with immediate victory over temporary enemies. Moreover, from this time the personal element of Messianic prophecy becomes increasingly distinct. The hope for a glorious future is now made dependent on the advent of an anointed king, and the new constitution arising out of the establishment of the throne of David is reflected in the Messianic hopes which shape themselves into pictures of his achievements.

I. It has been customary to mark this era of prophecy as beginning with the reign of David, and no doubt the most remarkable prophecies did not appear earlier. But the success of David sprang directly out of the great preparatory work of Samuel. As the organiser of the new order of prophets, Samuel naturally stands at

the head of the age of prophecy, and in his general relations to the nation as Levite, Nazarene, judge, and founder of the monarchy, it was not Saul and not David, but Samuel, who was inspired to instigate the great national revival, and consummate the revolution which saved Israel from disintegrating anarchy, and ushered in the splendid reigns of the earlier kings. "Samuel," says Ewald,¹ "is one of the few great men in history who in critical times, by sheer force of character and invincible energy, terminate the previous form of a great existing system, at first against their own will, but afterwards, when convinced of the necessity, with all the force and eagerness of their nature, and who then initiate a better form with the happiest results, though amid much personal suffering and persecution."

The sublime vision of an anointed king, chosen and strengthened by the Eternal, makes its first appearance in the Song of Hannah the mother of Samuel ; at least, this is its first appearance in

¹ Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. i. p. 419.

Scripture. Of course those who dispute the date usually given to the poem might consider that it was not historically the first expression of the idea of a Messiah. The question of chronology, however, does not affect the meaning of the words:—

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth,
That he may lend might to his king,
And exalt the horn of his anointed.¹

We can only understand this new and striking feature of the ancient hope of Israel when we take into account the peculiar constitution of the Hebrew monarchy and the special circumstances of its origin. The dark age of the Judges was a proof that Israel could not live up to the idea of a government by the unseen King, the Eternal. The establishment of a human monarchy was a confession of this failure. As such it was humiliating. It involved a declension from the spiritual to the secular—a declension over which Samuel, who cherished true faith in the kingdom of heaven, rightly lamented. And yet the fall was really made long before, and

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 10.

manifested painfully by prevalent anarchy. Now, when an ideal is ineffective it is worse than useless, because it only encourages hypocrisy. Therefore, though the loss of practical faith in the ideal was an evil, the confession of this loss, and the consequent formation of the best practical form of government, was a good. With the establishment of the human kingship the ideal of Israel's government was lowered, but the real character of it was raised, because this kingship was seen and grasped as a great tangible fact, under the shadow of which the obedience and loyalty of the people could flourish. At the same time, the belief in the Divine government was not relinquished : on the contrary, from the first it exerted a powerful influence on the Hebrew notion of royalty. To the true Israelite his human king was only a "*vicar*," a "viceroy" of his supreme King, the eternal God. Even to the average Israelite the monarch was divinely chosen and divinely supported, so that there was a sacred dignity, a mystic glory, about the throne of the

anointed, incomparably more impressive than the sentimental glamour of Stuart and Bourbon royalism, and the vague "divinity" which, according to Shakespeare, "doth hedge a king." In some dimly conceived but very real way Divine government was thought to be laid upon his shoulders. Thus the theocracy was not superseded by the monarchy: it continued in combination with the human government; not, however, like the mediæval papal power, a rule of the priests—the temple had very little influence over the court. The real medium of Divine control was prophecy and not priesthood, so that the Divine government was carried on by the influence of truth and righteousness and the spiritual power of God, independent of ecclesiastical laws and clerical rank, and therefore it was vital and potent. This peculiarity of the Israelite throne is of immense importance to our present subject, because in it we may see the reason for the close association of the Messianic hopes with the ideal of the monarchy.

II. Saul was anointed by the prophet Samuel

as the chosen of God,¹ inspired himself by the spirit of prophecy,² and presented to the people as the king whom "the Eternal" had "set over them,"³ with assurances of Divine blessing on condition of fidelity to the supreme King,⁴ and consequent encouragements to look forward to the future thus initiated without fear,⁵ "for the Lord will not forsake his people."⁶ But though brave, simple, and patriotic, Saul, with his haughty will and evil temper, utterly failed to realise the ideal of the divinely ordered monarchy. It is very remarkable that the hopes of the splendid future which were now identified with the glory of the throne were bitterly disappointed in the reign of the very first king, and yet that they were not destroyed, but only shifted farther into the unseen future.

Like Saul, David was anointed by Samuel the king-maker, and overwhelmed by the influence of the Spirit of the Eternal.⁷ From the time of his first public appearance, the

¹ 1 Sam. x. 1.

² Ibid. x. 9-13.

³ Ibid. xii. 13.

⁴ Ibid. xii. 14.

⁵ Ibid. xii. 20.

⁶ Ibid. xii. 22.

⁷ Ibid. xvi. 13.

obscure shepherd lad was popular with all who knew him, and grew in fame as he grew in years.¹ Nevertheless, when he was called to the throne, the kingdom was not in that unanimous mood of enthusiasm with which his predecessor was welcomed. But though, unlike that of Saul, the reign of David began obscurely, amidst rivalries and seditions, and was often interrupted by foreign war and internal rebellion, it steadily grew in strength and influence, so that the warrior king was able to found a dynasty and bequeath to his son a glorious heritage of national prosperity. It was natural that men should think that now at length, after weary ages of expectation, the perfect times in which the grand old promises to the fathers would be fulfilled were dawning on the reviving nation. David, the anointed of the Eternal, was hailed as the man through whom these hopes were to be realised. Again they were not fulfilled, and yet this time the disappointment was not caused so much by the

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 30.

failure of the king himself, as was the case with Saul, but the very magnificence of the hopes themselves, which far exceeded all the achievements of the reign of David, triumphant and successful as this was on the whole, left them still unattainable. Special promises, however, were received by David for the establishment of his dynasty and the peaceful stability of the nation, the most remarkable of which is the prophecy of Nathan.¹ God will make of David a great name, and will appoint a place for Israel, and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own. After David's days are fulfilled, God will be a father to his son and successor, with the promise that "my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee : thy throne shall be established for ever."² Here we see the first instance of that remarkable blending of the great hope of Israel with the special prophecies concerning the family of

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 4-17.

² Ibid. vii. 15, 16.

David, which is henceforth a leading characteristic of the Messianic ideas.¹ The Messianic prophecy of David's reign is not confined to the records of the history, it is most fully expanded in the psalms of the royal poet. In order to understand the Messianic element of these psalms, it is not necessary for us to inquire what psalms were designed to refer to the coming Messiah. There is only one prophecy in the psalms of David which can be claimed without any doubt as a prediction of the Christ in this strict and narrow sense. Dr. Stanley Leathes can only discover ten or eleven Messianic psalms in the whole psalter.² But this reckoning only applies to the special prophecies of the future anointed king, and we are chiefly concerned with the larger ideal character of prophecy. Therefore I include under the name Messianic all those prophecies in which the coming glory is recognised, irrespective of the personal element with which this was ultimately associated.

¹ Ewald, vol. iii. p. 202.

² These are Psalms ii. viii. xvi. xx. xxi. xxii. xl. xlv. lxxii. lxxxix. cx. cxxxix. See "The Religion of the Christ," by Dr. Stanley Leathes, p. 107.

III. We have only to look into the psalms of David to see that they are characterised by a firm confidence in God and an unbounded hopefulness in regard to the future which is not weakened by the deepest adversity, but, on the contrary, serves to sustain the psalmist when the present is most dark and the near future most threatening. The earlier psalms of adversity, composed during the outlaw life of David, as a fugitive from the court of Saul, are brighter and more buoyant than the later psalms which commemorate his deep troubles occasioned by the rebellion of Absalom. The reason for this change is not far to seek. In his youth he was strong in his own innocence ; the persecution with which he was harassed, though unjust, did not wound his deeper feelings ; and throughout all these temporary hardships he was sustained by the hope of his own future destiny. But in his old age the memory of shameful sins silenced all boasts on the ground of his own goodness ; the base treachery of his family and trusted friends gave him the acutest grief ; while there was no

longer room for any large hopes for the remainder of his troubled reign. It was therefore only natural that the psalms of this period should breathe a sadder spirit, yet they too are confident, and sometimes break out into flashes of glorious prophecy. Where this is the case the prophecies are less personal and more spiritual than those of the earlier period. The confident hope in the future, grounded on faith in God's mercy and confirmed by inspired promises, expresses the very spirit of Messianic prophecy, even when it does not take any definite prophetic shape. It is such a marked feature of the psalms of David, that it would be superfluous to quote any illustrative passages — a quotation which, if complete, would include almost the whole of the Davidic Psalter.

But there are more definite prophecies in which the great hope of Israel appears in its new form associated with the kingly glory. In the first place David predicts the most glorious future for himself and his family.

In the 16th Psalm he describes himself as

God's "holy one," and expresses his assurance that he will be saved from death.

For thou wilt not abandon my soul unto Hades,
Nor give up thy holy one to see the pit.

The parallelism makes it evident that David is speaking of himself in both the clauses of the verse. In the first he says, "my soul," in the second, "thy holy one;" and the form of the poetry shuts us up to the conclusion that the same person must be indicated by each of the phrases. David is comforted with a most wonderful hope.

It may be that the natural reading of this passage does not lead us to the idea of protection against corruption after death, but rather implies that the psalmist will not be delivered over to death at all.¹ Yet it is not right to limit these words to the simple desire to escape death in one particular danger. The solemn energy of the assurance, and the emphatic allusion to escaping corruption, warrant us in claiming this as the

¹ The expression "to see the pit" seems to refer to any experience of burial, not to a protracted residence in the grave. David is not simply not to remain in the pit, he is not to *see* it. See Delitzsch, "Commentary on the Psalms," vol. i. p. 228.

earliest expression of the great human yearning for immortality inspired by Divine encouragements.¹ The apostles Peter and Paul quoted the prophecy with that explanation which I have already tried to show is the true key to the full significance of all those Messianic prophecies which are identified by their authors with contemporary persons.² David did escape death, but only for a time. His confident prediction was therefore only temporarily true of himself, yet it implied that infinite Divine goodness which could not be exhausted by any temporary deliverance, and is the source of the eternal life of which our Lord's resurrection is the first-fruits. Therefore, though we have no reason to think that David was thinking of any one but himself, still it is apparent that he did utter a prophecy the full meaning of which was not realised in his own experience, nor in any human experience before Christ. Elsewhere David calls himself "a green olive tree in the house of God,"³ and

¹ See Dr. Stanley Leathes, "The Religion of the Christ," p. 110. ² Acts ii. 29-32 ; xiii. 35-37. ³ Psa. lii. 8.

"the beloved of God,"¹ and he is assured of great conquests through the might of his God, so that even after the rebellion of Absalom he looks forward to a long future of Divine favour.² In these and other instances of which they are typical, David is simply referring to himself and to some wonderful Divine destiny which attaches to his future.

Secondly. David sometimes appears to be carried away by the grand hopes which are set before him, so that he idealises his own destiny and predicts more than the most sanguine egoist could ever expect to attain.³ His glowing description of God's blessings far exceeds all possible experience, and the exalted language in which it is expressed is an embodiment of the very grandest ideal hopes.⁴ The later Jews interpret the 20th and 21st Psalms as referring directly to the Messiah, but we have no reason to think that David intended to give that specially prophetic signification to them. On the other

¹ Psal. lx. 5.

² See Ibid. xx. xxi.

³ Ibid. lxi. 5, 7.

⁴ Ibid. xxi. 4-7.

hand, Perowne thinks they are simply instances of poetic hyperbole, and compares the strongest phrases in them with the familiar Oriental expression, "O King, live for ever."¹ We should not need to go beyond this simple explanation of Perowne's if these few phrases stood by themselves: it is when we remember that they are types of a great many more in the other psalms, and consider them in the light of the widespread hope of Israel, that we are compelled to regard them as implying a sober belief in the future full realisation of them.

Thirdly. There is one psalm in which David neither anticipates his own future nor simply idealises his personal history, but distinctly prophesies the coming of a king and priest greater than himself. This is the famous 110th Psalm, the only psalm of David which is clearly Messianic, not only ideally and subjectively, but also concretely and historically. The Davidic authorship of the psalm cannot be reasonably ques-

¹ It is needless to say that Kuenen takes this view of the passage. See "Prophets," &c. p. 489.

tioned, yet there are several points which show that David could not be referring to himself. First, our Lord's unanswerable argument proves that the general form of the ode is against this interpretation. David describes the king in the third person, and with reverence, as "*my Lord*." We cannot take this to be a reference to the writer without doing violence to the words.¹ Secondly, the exalted character of the whole prophecy raises it quite out of comparison with those other psalms in which David refers to himself in strong and confident language. Thirdly, the reference to the priesthood is meaningless as applied to David. David was in no sense a priest after the order of Melchizedec, nor indeed a priest at all.² If David is not writing of himself he must be writing of some greater king of the future. This

¹ See Matt. xxii. 41-46.

² Of course Kuenen tries to whittle away the meaning of this important prophecy by using the magic word "hyberbole." But surely priest is not a hyperbolical name for king, nor would the idea of hyperbole make the form of description of himself by the author less absurd. When the Hebrew kings exercised power in religious matters this was always by a *jus circa sacra, sed non in sacris*. See Kuenen, "Prophecy," &c. p. 493.

coming king, we learn, will be David's son.¹ He is to sit at the right hand of the Eternal, in the highest place of honour, until his enemies are subdued by the Eternal. God will make his power to stretch from Zion far and wide with the commission, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." His people clad in holy festive garments will come to welcome him.² More than this, he will be a priest; he will unite the throne with the altar, and so reconcile the two elements of the "basileo-theocracy" as they never had been united by David—a priest greater than Aaron, like Melchizedec; mysterious, solitary, and royal.³

But how came David to take such a momentous step in advance of his earlier ideas as to separate the Messianic hope from his own person, and fix upon another greater king for its accomplishment? Perhaps we may guess at some explanation of this great transition by referring to the history of the time when the psalm was composed. David was then victorious, but his

¹ Psa. cx. 1.

² Ibid. cx. 3.

³ Ibid. cx. 4.

success was associated with great personal shame and humiliation ; for the very war in which this victory was obtained was contemporaneous with the king's intrigue with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Perhaps his eyes were opened by this fall, so that he now saw how impossible it was for him to realise those mighty hopes he had formerly cherished ; and with the surrender of his own claim to the Messianic dignity there may have come new inspiration and insight into its deeper mysteries.

Thus we have in the 110th Psalm not only a projection of the Messianic times into the distant future—in itself a great gain—but the addition of new elements to the hope of Israel. An aureole of greater Divine glory now seems to surround it. The priestly element in particular is a novel feature in the prophecy, which was not understood at the time, and was therefore dropped out of notice in subsequent Messianic prophecies, and not revived until in much later ages men were ripe to appreciate it.

Still this psalm indicates so great an advance

beyond the earlier views of David that we should gladly welcome some confirmation of it, although by itself it speaks clearly enough. Now we have this confirmation in the ode entitled, "The last words of David."¹ As it is translated in the English Version it is not a prophecy, but simply a declaration of the general principles of righteous kingship and their rewards. We read, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God," &c. But this didactic purpose of an exalted poem, reducing it to the level of the most commonplace truism, is contrary to the genius of the Hebrew language ; and although no verb designating futurity is found in the passage, the analogy of Hebrew poetry should suggest that where objects are raised before us in vision they are not presented as mere instances of what ought to be — they are shown as adumbrations of what will be. Therefore it seems evident that in his old age David was still holding to the ancient covenant, though he had then renounced all hope of enjoying its blessings in

¹ 2 Sam. xxxiii. 1.

his own person. He believed that this would be fulfilled to his family, and a second time he predicted the advent of a greater king, bringing in a cloudless day, very different from his own troubled and often stormy reign.

So far I have endeavoured to point out the chief points in the Messianic hopes of David ; but there are two psalms of David which are commonly regarded as Messianic, although they do not embody the hope of the coming glory of Israel, but indicate other elements in the life and character of the Messiah. One of these is the 22nd Psalm, which is supposed by some to contain predictions of the suffering Messiah, and therefore to strike the first note of that mystic prophecy, the unearthly sorrow of which contrasts so strangely with the exuberant hopefulness of the Messianic ideas generally. Hengstenberg, in the earlier editions of his *Christology*, claimed this 22nd Psalm as Messianic, but in the later editions, and in the second edition of his commentary, he gave up this position, and interpreted the psalm as referring

to "the ideal person of the righteous man;" and with this explanation Delitzsch agrees, while Professor J. H. Kurtz says that it is now usually acknowledged that the Messianic "passion psalms" must be understood typically. In favour of the Messianic intention of these psalms and the other "passion psalms," such as the 71st, the 102nd, and the 109th, it is said that the sorrow is too deep, and the transition to victorious joy too great and sudden, to be experienced in any human life. But it seems most reasonable to suppose that here the personal suffering of the psalmist is simply idealised. Still we may detect here the germ out of which the later thought of a suffering Messiah grew, because in brooding over these ideal pictures of grief, subsequent thinkers were led to see a deeper signification in the sufferings they record, and so were prepared for the revelation of that Divine mystery which was only fully manifested on the cross.¹

¹ See "Messianic Prophecy," by Dr. Riehm, p. 224, where these and similar prophecies are regarded as having a *typical* Messianic signification.

The other psalm to which I refer is the 40th. In the broadest sense of the words there are Messianic ideas in this psalm, and yet there is no valid reason for saying that David is projecting himself into the personality of Christ. He is idealising upon his own experience. He lays down the principle that God does not desire sacrificial offerings, but obedient service in doing his will.¹ On this grand principle he resolved to act when, as the anointed of the Eternal, but not yet crowned, he was prepared to ascend the throne of Israel. It is a principle which David never fully carried out. He bequeathed it as an ideal for subsequent ages, determining the type of character about which the visions of the perfect future were to gather in the minds of the more spiritual Israelites. To them henceforth the ideal could not be satisfied by the most brilliant display of regal power, unless this were accompanied by the unseen beauty of humble submission to the will of God.

IV. The genuine psalms of Asaph belong to

¹ Psa. xl. 7-9.

this period.¹ But after we have read the great Davidic odes, we gain from them little or no fresh light on the Messianic ideas. It is worthy of note, however, that Asaph is prophetic, although he delights most in retrospective glances. In his prophecy he predicts the coming of God to judgment,² and the future salvation, in a way which God will show to those who are not content with barren ritualism, but serve Him with true spiritual worship.³

V. With the reign of Solomon the material glory of the Hebrew monarchy reached its zenith. The wide extension of territory, the rapid development of maritime trade, rivalling the famous trade of Tyre, the vast increase of wealth, civilization, and luxury, the erection of a temple which was one of the wonders of the world, and the brilliant achievements of the great king himself, combined for the moment to lift the little Jewish state out of its seclusion and obscurity into the full light of the great world's history. At the

¹ See 2 Chron. xxix. 30 ; Neh. xii. 46.

² Psa. l. 6.

³ Ibid. l. 23.

same time, to the spiritual Jew, the union of prophecy with royalty in the person of Solomon must have raised the hope that the ideal of the monarchy was about to be realised in its identification with the theocracy.¹ If Saul had failed, if even David had not brought in the perfect times, surely they must come in the splendour of Solomon's reign? The confident expectation of this inspired that magnificent ode of Solomon's, the 72nd Psalm. But if, as is probable, Solomon was the author of the psalm, who was the subject of its aspirations? Solomon or the Messiah? All the personal and circumstantial details point to Solomon.² All the moral and spiritual characteristics correspond with the Messianic era. Therefore it seems plain that Solomon here identifies his own destiny with the Messianic hope. Such an identification may seem strange, but it must be remembered that the great hope had not yet developed that unique Divine character which we now ascribe to

¹ See Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. iii. p. 299.

² Psa. lxxii. 7-11.

Christ, and that, on the other hand, the sudden brilliancy of this wonderful age must have been perfectly dazzling and intoxicating to those who lived in it. Besides, did not David look for the realisation of these promises in his own person at least during the earlier part of his reign. Nevertheless, it is scarcely possible to read this wonderful psalm without feeling that Solomon could not have written it with a distinct belief that it would be literally and entirely fulfilled by himself. It is not a dry address from the throne, pledging his future policy in hard legal phraseology ; it is a poem, and a poem struck off at white heat, so that we may well think that the poet was carried out of himself and idealising his destiny. History has told how Solomon "in all his glory" did not satisfy the hopes he raised, and how this glory was corrupted before the end of his reign. The great hope had still to be shifted further into the future, and there, divorced from the concrete circumstances with which the king associated them, the ideal elements of his psalm were handed down to later days as pre-

dictions of the perfect times still unfulfilled, and yet still cherished with unabated confidence. But whether the psalm was associated by the author with his own person or not, it is for us the fullest and richest Messianic prophecy which had yet been uttered.

The prophecy is cast in the form of a prayer. It opens with a petition that God will grant "righteousness to the king" himself, in order that he may justly govern God's people, especially the afflicted. The words which follow down to the end of the eighth verse should be read as a continuation of this prayer. The most striking and original characteristic of the psalm—the one feature which contrasts decisively with the Messianic prophecy of David, and shows a new stage in the development of the great hope of Israel—is the gentle and pacific colour of its ideal, typified by the name of its author. Solomon does not ask for victory over his enemies, as his father in more troubled times was so often constrained to do, nor for any external demonstration of might and majesty, but for the home blessings

of a well-ordered state, in which justice is rendered to the injured against their oppressors,¹ and God is feared unceasingly,² and the king's power is felt in gentleness and fostering beneficence, "like rain upon the meadow grass,"³ and there is abundance of peace, to endure as long as the moon ; and he looks for the extension of these blessings throughout wide domains stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, and from the Euphrates to the furthest limits of the mysterious West.

VI. For nearly two hundred years after the death of Solomon the voice of prophecy was rarely heard. It was a time of great prophets ; it could boast of Elijah, who is honoured as the greatest of the prophets after Moses ; but these prophets were men of action. They were political leaders, agitators against the growing corruption of the time, men who were not content to work against evil merely by teaching the great principles of righteousness, but who felt called upon to instigate revolts and depose kings and

¹ Psa. lxxii. 4.

² Il. id. lxxii. 5.

³ Ibid. lxxii. 6.

bring about reforms by direct practical measures. We have little literary remains of their work, just because these men were concerned more with deeds than with words. When they spoke, their words were addressed to the immediate occasion ; therefore we are not to be surprised that they had little to say about the grand ideal hopes which occupied so much of the thought of later prophets, who lived at a time when prophecy had lost the power of commanding implicit obedience, and was confined to the quieter influence of spiritual persuasion.

Though the hope of Israel was preserved during these two centuries, there was little encouragement to further its development. If Solomon had not fulfilled the promise of his youth, still less did his successor approach the Messianic ideal. Preserving the severity of his father's later years without any of their strength and grandeur, Rehoboam provoked the disruption which was the first step in the decline of Israel. It wanted a strong hand to hold together the heterogeneous elements of the empire ; and

now that this was gone, the powerful tribe of Ephraim, which could never brook a position of inferiority, found occasion to take the lead in founding a new kingdom. People were no longer dazzled by the glitter of Solomon's reign ; they had found a proud sceptre and a brilliant court costly luxuries. They had learnt a deeper lesson in discovering that material prosperity did not guarantee the solid blessings so truly valued in the 72nd Psalm. In some respects it was good for the nation that there was no second Solomon. Had such a man appeared, it is quite possible that the kingdom would have swollen into one of those cumbrous Oriental monarchies in which everything is sacrificed to material power and luxury ; and then, though Jerusalem might have rivalled Nineveh, the grand and lonely destiny of Israel as the people of God would have been lost to the world. Rehoboam opened the eyes of Israel to the great mistake of expecting the Messianic glory by means of this vulgar form of world-empire ; and the prophetic leaders of the disruption were instigated by a

pure desire to realise the true idea of the monarchy now degraded by Judah. But the Ten Tribes soon forgot this grand justification for their secession, and fell into idolatry and immorality and political disorder, while the prophets strove in vain to resist their downward course. "The whole history of this kingdom for more than two centuries and a half is resolved in the last resort into the contest, gigantic alike by the forces brought into play and the length of its duration, between the two independent powers of the ancient community—prophetism and the crown."¹

Compared with the dark and tumultuous history of Israel during this time, the history of the southern kingdom presents a picture of peaceful prosperity and religious fidelity. But where was the accomplishment of the prophecies of the perfect times? If David and Solomon had not fulfilled them, certainly the greatest of their descendants never could do so, for neither Asa, nor Jehoshaphat, nor Hezekiah could pre-

¹ Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. iv. p. 6.

tend to equal the glory of the brief but brilliant earlier era. Thus the Messianic idea was still a hope, and a hope deferred that was making the heart sick, as we may see from the tone of mingled expectancy and disappointment which characterises the 89th Psalm. This psalm appears to have been written during the reign of Rehoboam, and at the time when the king had become prematurely old with trouble, after having been robbed of a large part of his territory in the revolt of Jeroboam, and still further humiliated by later disasters. The psalmist gives expression to the nation's feelings of deep distress as he cries out to God for a return of the blessings of David, and quotes the promises of everlasting favour.¹ He sees in the present troubles a sad contrast to the glorious hopes which were built upon those promises, yet he does not lose faith in the promises because they are not at once realised.² The psalm does not add anything to the ancient hope of Israel, but it is remarkable for the testimony which it bears to

¹ Psa. lxxxix. 4, 5.

² Ibid. lxxxix. 47, 50, 52.

the meaning of the earlier prophetic psalms. It belongs to an age very little later than the age of those great prophecies. Its unknown author is as truly "oriental" as any of his predecessors, and he is evidently a master of the highest style of poetry. Yet he never thinks of resolving the old predictions into the language of imaginative hyperbole or courtly adulation. He has not the least doubt that they are promises destined to be fulfilled to the letter. To him the ideal is not merely a poetic dream; it is a prophetic truth. This testimony to the very earliest interpretation of Messianic prophecies is of immense value, because it confirms us in giving a similar interpretation to all the writings of the same class. On the other hand, it appears, the psalmist does not grasp the distinct Messianic hope which David uttered in the 110th Psalm. He looks for the perfect time under the reign of David's family, but he does not speak of any one king of the future.

The next indication of Messianic prophecy of any importance is in the 45th Psalm, which pro-

bably dates from the reign of Jehoram, a hundred years after the death of Solomon. The happy and prosperous reign of Jehoshaphat, only second in glory to that of Solomon himself, prepared the way for the grandest expectations when his son mounted the throne. Once more plaintive petitions were exchanged for confident expectations. The ode in which the reviving hopes of the nation were celebrated seems to have been composed on the occasion of the marriage of Jehoram King of Judah with Athaliah, daughter of Ahab King of Israel—a marriage which, at the first blush of it, promised fair to the two kingdoms as the symbol of the healing of their ancient feuds. But so grievously were these anticipations disappointed, through the weakness of the king and the wickedness of his wife, that the psalm would read almost like a satire, if we did not remember that the hopes it sets forth are real and eternal, though the expected form of their fulfilment was here, more than in any previous instance, doomed to utter failure. Once grant the deep significance of the ideal elements of prophecy, and its

persistence throughout the most untoward circumstances, and the very shame and humiliation of the supposed hero only the more confirms the remarkable Messianic meaning of language which must wait its fulfilment in some unseen future glory. Thus, as we read what the psalmist thought to ascribe to Jehoram, we see what he really did ascribe to the ideal king :—

With beauty art thou arrayed beyond the children of
men ;

Gracefulness is shed upon thy lips ;

Therefore hath God blessed thee for ever.

* * * * *

And in thy majesty press through, ride on,
For the sake of truth and of the suffering of innocence,
And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible deeds.

The ideal king is here recognised not only as beautiful, and majestic, and victorious, but especially as a champion of wronged innocence. What are we to make of the following verse, translated in the Authorised Version, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever ; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre" ? We may set aside at once the interpretation, "Thy throne is God for ever and ever,"

because it is quite contrary to the Hebrew habits of thought and speech. Can we follow the English translation, and understand that the king is here called God? Now there can be no doubt that in other parts of this psalm the writer is thinking of an earthly monarch, as the whole song is an epithalamium. We have no warrant for the attempt to allegorise references to the king's marriage, and so give them a spiritual signification. It is true that the Jews used the word "Elohim" much more loosely than the strict monotheism of their religion would have prepared us to expect: the name is applied by way of analogy to men,¹ and therefore it is possible that in his glowing poetic picture the psalmist might address the king as "God" in this lower sense. But it is more natural and simple to translate the phrase, "Thy throne of God"—*i.e.*, thy divinely established throne—"endureth for ever." This rendering gives us two important Messianic ideas—the Divine origin and the everlasting destiny of the great King.

¹ *E.g.*, see Gen. xxi. 6; xxii. 7 *et seq.*; Psa. lxxxii. 6; cxxxviii. 1.

VII. *Obadiah*. It is impossible to fix with certainty the date of the Book of Obadiah, but those critics who ascribe to it a comparatively late origin admit that it must have been founded upon a work of an earlier date, and do not deny that Obadiah himself was one of the first of the great prophets. The prophecy is devoted to a denunciation of woe against Edom and the proud warriors of Petra, for their wickedness in joining with heathen invaders in the sack of Jerusalem.¹ But, brief as it is, it does not close without an encouragement of the Messianic hope, and a promise that "the day of the Eternal" is near.² Thus the expression, "the day of the Eternal," so frequent in the mouths of later prophets, may be traced back to Obadiah, and if he lived before the time of Joel, it may be considered to have originated with this prophet. Primarily it signifies the day when the Eternal shall appear in His glory and power, but it has a secondary signification referring to the end of this great manifestation of judgment and doom.

¹ Obad. vers. 10-14.

² Ibid. ver. 15.

Here the judgment and doom are for all the nations, and therefore the day of the Eternal brings deliverance to His own people. Then both of the kingdoms are to triumph over Edom,¹ and take possession of the land, and recover the lost territories of their own tribes.² Their triumph will be effected by the help of "saviours."³ Though it is too much to say with Hengstenberg, "that under the saviours the Saviour *par excellence* is concealed," still the distinct acknowledgment of the future advent of saviours suggests that the future happiness of the people will grow out of some Messianic work of salvation. Then "the kingdom shall be the Lord's."⁴ This is the final consummation carrying us back to the prediction that Mount Sion shall be a sanctuary,⁵ and reminding us that the perfect time of the future is not simply a time of prosperity, but a season of holiness, of separation from the evil of the world, and loyalty to God.

¹ Obad. ver. 18.

² Ibid. vers. 19, 21.

³ Ibid. ver. 21.

⁴ Ibid. ver. 21.

⁵ *Godesh*—inviolable, holy.

VIII. *Jonah*. Though the Book of Jonah was probably written long after the ninth century, the events, on the tradition of which it is founded, belong to this time.¹ Evidently the main object of the history of Jonah is to teach that God's mercy is not confined to Israel, and thus to shadow forth that mystery which was "hid from ages and from generations;"² and which was so unwelcome to the Jews many centuries later that the great Apostle Paul died as a martyr to his fidelity in proclaiming it. The narrative itself conveys the most direct rebuke to the narrow exclusiveness so common with the very best of Jews, and is a most glorious revelation of the depth and breadth of the grace of God. Nineveh, the terrible power now beginning to make its influence felt as far west as Palestine, is just enough known, yet just sufficiently obscure, to be regarded with a

¹ 2 Kings xiv. 25 puts the date of the prophet Jonah back to the reign of Jeroboam II., but the style and historical form of the Book show that it was of later origin. It was evidently written after the destruction of Nineveh (iii. 3).

² Col. i. 26.

vague terror by Israel and all the neighbouring nations. This wicked, luxurious, powerful city, already looming in the distance as the most formidable enemy of "the people of God," is visited by a Hebrew prophet, warned of approaching destruction, brought to a condition of genuine repentance, and then favoured with the complete forgiveness of God. The promise of Abraham, that his blessing should be the type of blessing to all mankind,¹ the prophecy of Solomon, that all nations should come under the Messianic reign, and share in its blessing,² even most of the later predictions about the light to lighten the Gentiles,³ all give precedence to the Jew ; but in this book the peculiar privileges of the chosen people are persistently thrust aside. The one Jew who appears in it is a type of the worst faults of his nation ; and though the message is sent to Nineveh through the mission of this Jewish prophet, the Divine forgiveness is not given indirectly through participation in the glory of Israel, but immediately as an act of

¹ Gen. xii. 3.² Psal. lxxii.³ Isa. lx.

mercy from the God who is the King and the Saviour, not of the Jews only, but of the whole human family,

IX. *Joel*. (B.C. 877.) With the doubtful exception of Obadiah, Joel is the first *literary* prophet of the Bible. He belongs to the kingdom of Judah, and seems to have prophesied in the reign of Joash.¹ We may gather from the tone of his book that he wrote at a time when the prophetic office was still retaining its antique grandeur as yet unopposed by the scepticism of the people or the official jealousy of the priests. There are no references to the sin of idolatry in the prophecy, and this agrees with what we know of the reign of Joash when, led by the reforms of the priest Jehoiada, the people had abandoned the idolatry which prevailed under Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah, and returned to the worship of the Eternal.² But this was

¹ Credner, Maurer, Hitzig, Meier, Winer, Ewald, Hofmann, Bauer, Delitzsch, and Keil agree on this date, but the time of Joel has been very differently reckoned by conflicting critics. For a good account of these various opinions, see Davidson, "Introd." vol. ii. p. 248.

² 2 Kings xi. 17 *et seq.* ; 2 Chron. xxiii. 16 *et seq.*

not a time of prosperity ; the country was already impoverished by the loss of territory, as well as men and treasures, incurred by the inroads of the heathen, when a great domestic trouble fell upon it with the severity of a judgment from heaven. In the midst of a long and oppressive drought, a plague of locusts devastated the land.¹ While the distress was at its height Joel appeared as the spokesman of the general lamentation ;² and also, like a true prophet, as the articulate conscience of the nation.³ Seeing in this judgment the type and herald of a greater doom in the awful day of the Eternal,⁴ he called the people to a solemn assembly in the temple for fasting and humiliation.⁵ The day of humiliation was duly observed, and soon after there came a plentiful rainfall.⁶ Then Joel struck into a very different vein of prophecy. The lamentations and darker presentiments of his first utterance belonged to the season of national chastisement. With the return of pro-

¹ Joel i. 17-20 ; ii. 1-11, 25.

² Ibid. i. 8.

³ Ibid. i. 5.

⁴ Ibid. i. 15 ; ii. 2 *et seq.* ; iii. 14.

⁵ Ibid. i. 14 ; ii. 15.

⁶ Ibid. ii. 18.

sperity he was inspired to rouse the slumbering Messianic hopes of ancient Israel, and strike some grand new chords of his own. This prophecy occupies the second half of the Book of Joel.¹ There are several points of interest in it.

First, the personal element of the hope of Israel which is so prominent in the Psalms is not once alluded to in this prophecy. There is no description of a future king—"The anointed of the Eternal." There is no reference to *any* man in whose advent the glorious future is contained. The promise is general, to the nation as a whole. But we are not to infer from this omission that Joel did not accept the expectation of a "Messiah," which we have seen, from the testimony of the Psalms, had now become a tradition. There was nothing in the special circumstances of the time to call for fresh promises in that direction. The people were neither suffering from any new disappointment, nor rejoicing over any new glory of the throne. Their trouble had not come from the court or the army; it

¹ From ii. 19 to the close.

had nothing to do with political considerations. It fell directly on the people as a Divine chastisement. So the return of prosperity began with a revival of the natural blessings of the earth, and this suggested the future spread of higher spiritual blessings.

Secondly, the prophecy opens with a description of renewed fertility, and the promise of an abundant harvest in place of the cruel famine which prevailed in the time of the drought and locusts. But Joel is not satisfied with this present prosperity. He sees in it a proof that the Divine favour will never be taken from Israel. We are reminded of the promise to Noah that God would "never again smite everything living,"¹ when the prophet says, "Then eat on and be filled, and praise the name of the Eternal, your God, who hath dealt with you wonderfully, *and never again will my people be ashamed.* Ye perceive that in the midst of Israel am I, and I am the Eternal, your God, and none besides, and never again will my people be ashamed."²

¹ Gen. viii. 21.

² Joel ii. 26, 27.

But, thirdly, Joel passes beyond the simple promise of natural fertility as the effect of endless Divine favour to a more spiritual vision of the distant future. Gazing down the vista of the ages, he sees a time when the Spirit of God will be shed abroad richly and abundantly in a vision, which shows a wonderful advance beyond the older Messianic predictions with their glowing pictures of material prosperity.¹ Joel says that the future will be spiritually glorious. The glory will be found in the fuller presence of the Spirit of God as the inspiration of prophecy. It is not enough for the people "to eat and be filled;" they are to look forward to a grand future when all their temporal prosperity will be crowned by the wonderful gift of the Spirit. The prophecy is as remarkable for its breadth as for its spirituality. No official jealousy prevents the prophet from declaring that the gift will not be confined to his own order. The distinction between the inspired prophet and the uninspired multitude is to be swallowed up in universality

¹ Joel ii. 28, 29.

of inspiration. The old channels will be obliterated, and a flood of spiritual influences will spread out in all directions. This will be literally universal. God is represented as saying, "I will pour out my Spirit over all flesh." It is to be irrespective of sex, of age, or of social condition. Sons and daughters, old men and youths, free men and slaves, all shall share in it. It will be so free and varied that it will suit itself to every kind of mental condition. Old age, sober and reflective, will dream its dim dreams of the night; and youth, eager and aspiring, will see its brighter visions in broad day. Such a prophecy speaks for its own inspiration.

Fourthly, the day of the Eternal, which in the earlier prophecy loomed on the near horizon as the doomsday of the nation, is now seen to follow the coming of the new spirit of prophecy, as a day of judgment to the heathen nations, and therefore a time of triumph for the people of God. With lofty strains of dramatic language Joel pictures this great day. His eye kindles and his voice rises as his soul is stirred to its

depths before the mighty vision of the great and terrible day of the Eternal.¹ The heathen are then to be gathered into the valley of Jehoshaphat (God judges) to be judged, and to receive swift retribution, while the captive Israelites are to be restored to their homes. A martial spirit, almost like the spirit of the grand age of David, calls the people to battle against the nations, crying, "Awake, ye heroes ; hither to the battle, all men of war ;"² for Judah is to be the instrument of the Divine judgment in this awful harvest of wickedness. In fatal tumult and darkness and thunders the sickle will be put in and the nations will fall. But for His own people the Eternal is a refuge and a fastness. Thus, like Obadiah, Joel associates the judgment-day of the Eternal with the Messianic glory of His people. This idea is repeated in later prophecy down to the last great utterance of Daniel.³ It may be compared with our Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the general judgment in association with the promise of His second advent.

¹ Joel iii.² Ibid. iii. 9.³ Dan. xii. 2.

Lastly, the grand eloquence of the woe prophecy is exhausted in the vision of "Jerusalem delivered," which brings us back to the picture of the fair landscape of Judah after the mountain springs and brooks of the valley have poured fertility again over the parched and devastated land ; and then once more the prophet repeats the encouraging promise of the perpetual security of the people of God in a description of peaceful prosperity,¹ which shines in brilliant contrast to the wild, tumultuous scenes of the previous passage, like the vividly contrasted pictures in "The Palace of Art," where—

One seem'd an iron coast and angry waves,
And

One an English home ; grey twilight pour'd
On dewy pastures, dewy trees.

The whole prophecy, with its promise of renewed prosperity and increasing Divine protection, its lofty description of the era of the Spirit, and its awful vision of judgment, combines to form a rich and varied picture of the great

¹ Joel iii. 18.

Hebrew Utopia which stands forth as one of the grandest Messianic predictions yet recorded. It is Messianic in the ideal sense because it is instinct with the hope of Israel. It is Messianic in the historical sense, for the judgment of the nations and the outpouring of the Spirit were never accomplished before the time of Christ.

X. *Amos*. (B.C. 790.)¹ Early in the eighth century before Christ, while Uzziah was reigning at Jerusalem and Jeroboam II. in the northern kingdom, a strange scene startled the court at Bethel. Amos, a simple, plain man, a shepherd,² and cultivator of sycamores, whose boast was that he had no connection with the professional order of prophets, was quietly following his flock, when he heard the voice of the Eternal, saying, "Go prophesy unto my people Israel."³ Without delay he set out from his rustic home in the south of Judah to visit the kingdom of Samaria, and denounce the judgment of God on the

¹ See Baur, "Der Prophet Amos erklärt, Einleitung," p. 58 *et seq.* : referred to by Davidson, "Introd." vol. ii. p. 255 ; also Ewald, "Prophets," &c. vol. i. p. 151.

² Amos i. 1 ; vii. 14, 15.

³ Ibid. vii. 15.

people of Israel for their idolatry and sensuality and unrighteous government. It was a most hazardous mission, yet it seems to have made a deep impression on those who had not yet fallen too low to recognise the authority of a true messenger from the Eternal. But his partial success roused the jealousy of an idolatrous priest, Amaziah, and his calumnies and persecutions of this man compelled Amos to leave Bethel, though he did so with a courage and dignity worthy of his high vocation.¹ Years after, Amos recorded his utterances against Israel, and added fresh prophecies of doom against the heathen nations, and fresh warnings of judgment against the idle, luxurious inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Book of Amos is almost entirely occupied with these appeals to the conscience and warnings of approaching punishment. But it closes with a vision of better days, which is the more remarkable, because in itself the record of denunciations would have been complete without it. There was nothing in the circum-

¹ Amos vii. 10-17.

stances to call out the enthusiasm of hope, as there was in the events out of which the grandest Messianic psalms sprung. It is therefore remarkable not only as a contrast to the prevailing tone of rebuke which dominates all the rest of the book, but as bearing witness to some deep source of inspiration independent of the superficial appearance of events. In form the whole prophecy is typical of the general method of Messianic prediction. First, the people are roused to a consciousness of guilt. Then the Divine chastisement of sin is foreshadowed. Lastly, beyond the cloud of wrath the light of a far-off glory suddenly breaks upon their gaze. In the prophecy of Amos this final prospect is pregnant with Divine hopes. The idea of "a remnant" always to be saved in the worst calamities—the Calvinistic element of the Old Testament, and yet a nobler thought than the gloomy Geneva dogma—makes its first appearance here. "Behold the eyes of the Lord, the Eternal, are upon the sinful kingdom, that I should destroy it from the face of the land ; only that I will not utterly

destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Eternal." Israel is to be "not utterly destroyed ;" Judah is to be the centre of greater privileges. The old fortifications of Zion will be rebuilt, and supremacy over Edom and the heathen secured, after which the captive Israelites will be brought home again, and the former unity of the kingdoms restored to the flourishing condition of David's days, while spiritual will be added to material blessings, and the peace and prosperity will be perpetual.¹

XI. *Hosea*. (About B.C. 780.)² Amos, it appears, prophesied some time during the reign of Jeroboam II. Before the close of the same reign, but after the sins of Israel denounced by the earlier prophet were fully matured,

¹ Amos ix. 8-15.

² It is impossible to fix accurately the date of Hosea. According to the inscription (Hosea i. 1) he prophesied under Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and under Jeroboam II., king of Israel. But, as we do not know how long before the death of Jeroboam II. he began his work, nor how long after the accession of Hezekiah he continued it, all we can be sure of is that this could not have been commenced after the date given in the text, nor much earlier, as that date would give a duration of at least fifty years. See Ewald, "Prophets," &c., vol. i. p. 214.

another preacher of repentance was raised up. This was Hosea, a native of the northern kingdom, but a resident in Judah at the time when he wrote his book. The public life of Hosea divides itself into three parts. First, there is his work in Samaria during the reign of Jeroboam ; secondly, his work in the same country in the midst of the deepening depravity and wild confusion which broke out immediately after the death of that soldier-king ; and, lastly, his work in Judah after his expulsion from his native land. The prophecies about the guilt and doom of Israel are moulded on the domestic experience of the prophet. His wife had been unfaithful ; but instead of discarding her, as the law permitted, he learnt that it was God's will that he should purchase her back like a slave from her companion in guilt, and, though treating her at first with needful severity, never cease to love her, and at last to welcome her to his house.¹ Hosea recognised in his own sad personal experience a type of the present

¹ Hosea iii. 1-3.

condition and future destiny of Israel. Israel is unfaithful to the Eternal. She must be driven out to the wilderness, there to be drilled into repentance, after which she will receive a renewal of Divine blessing, like the flourishing of vines in the desert, and the grandeur of the old Mosaic age will return; "and then, saith the Eternal, thou wilt cry, My husband, and thou wilt not call me any more, My master." God's covenanted mercies will extend over all things in the land, down to the cattle and birds and the very worms of the earth.¹ Finally, as the spiritual apostasy of Israel followed her political revolt from the house of David, so the return to the love of God will be accompanied by renewed loyalty to the throne of David.²

These prophecies cast in the form of narratives are followed by the discourses of Hosea,³ in the chief part of which he enlarges upon the guilt of the people, and their consequent punishment of banishment and national dissolution.⁴

¹ Hosea ii. 16-20.

² Ibid. iii. 5.

³ Ibid. iv.-xiv.

⁴ Ibid iv.-xi.

They close with a picture of the hope of Israel based on a retrospect of the past mercies of the Eternal, which is more than a revival of old promises. It has a freshness and originality of its own, and a spiritual depth and fervour which give quite a new tone to the Messianic ideas.

In particular, there are two strikingly characteristic features of the Messianic prophecy of Hosea.

The first is its *moral* character. The renewal of the favour of God is not promised as an absolute destiny—as something “which is in the fates,” as the Sibylline oracle says. It is conditioned by a suitable repentance. Israel must first return to the Eternal. True, it is the unchanging love of God that is leading the people into a furnace of affliction ; but no enjoyment of the Divine favour is possible until they have forsaken their sins and returned to loyal submission. “O Israel, return unto the Eternal, thy God, for thou hast stumbled by thy guilt.”¹ This is the burden of the whole prophecy, the

¹ Hosea xiv. 1.

practical aim of all its rebukes, the necessary condition of all its promises.

The second remarkable feature of this prophecy is its *affectionate* character. To Hosea, with his large heart chastened by the bitter grief of wounded human love, it was given to penetrate most deeply into the ineffable mystery of the Perfect Love. "No older prophet," says Ewald,¹ "has such profound and beautiful conceptions as he of the love of Jahve, which outlasts all things and heals all evils." He bewails the fall of Israel with a deep pathos, which reveals something of the mystery of the sorrow of the love of God. Even when roused to indignation by the gross vices and base ingratitude of the people, the wrath which he is inspired to utter is just the true expression of wronged affection. When he comes to the hopes of the glorious future, they are centered in the same wonderful love of God. The love which first redeemed the people from Egypt follows them through all their history ; it punishes the guilty,

¹ Ewald, "Prophets," &c. vol. i. p. 221.

but only that it may lead to repentance ; then it woos the penitent back to fidelity, and becomes the source of the great joy of the restoration. Not that Hosea discards the more common pictures of visible prosperity ;¹ but far above all these the true joy of the love of God rises, like the joy of the restored wife in the happiness of her husband. God says, "I will heal their backsliding and gladly love them." Hosea is the John of the Old Testament—a Boanerges when the love of God is wronged—a beloved disciple when he is able to anticipate the blessedness of that state in which perfect love casts out fear.² Joel had portrayed the higher intellectual features of the Messianic age in the abundant supply of the spirit of prophecy ; now Hosea describes its character of pure spiritual blessedness in the return of the people to the love of God, and the deep bliss of this, the highest emotion of which human nature is capable.

XII. *Psalm II.* The anonymous 2nd Psalm was probably written either in the reign of

¹ Hosea xiv. 4-9.

² 1 John iv. 18.

Uzziah or in the reign of Hezekiah.¹ Its author is unknown. It opens with an allusion to the uprising of the tributary nations such as that which threatened the kingdom when Uzziah ascended the throne.² The Psalmist predicts the defeat of these insurgents before the mighty thunders of the Eternal, who is enthroned in the heavens as the Supreme Ruler.³ The king is under the special care of God.⁴ He is the "anointed of the Eternal."⁵ Above all, he is His *Son*. From the seventh to the ninth verses this king is represented as speaking. He says—

The Eternal saith unto me, Thou art my son ;
This day I have begotten thee.

As a result of this anointing and sonship, he is to possess the nations for his inheritance, and his sway is to extend to the ends of the earth—a renewal of the old Messianic prophecy of universal dominion. The psalm concludes with a practical admonition, urging the recalcitrant

¹ This is the date assigned by Meier, Maurer, Delitzsch, and Kuenen. Ewald ascribes the psalm to the time of Solomon.

² Psa. ii. 1-3. ³ Ibid. ii. 4, 5. ⁴ Ibid. ii. 6. ⁵ Ibid. ii

kings to submit and do homage to "the Son," before they rouse the wrath of His Divine Father. The idea of the sonship is the leading thought of the psalm, the one peculiar feature of its Messianic prophecy. What is the meaning of it? Nearly all the predictions about the glory of the king are based on Nathan's great prophecy to David,¹ in which his call to the throne is represented as a result of Divine favour and choice. In the 89th Psalm the filial relationship of the king is recognised in the words—

He shall cry unto me, My father art thou,
My God, and the rock of my salvation!
In return I will make him my firstborn,
The highest with respect to the sons of the earth.²

In the present instance the sonship must be a fuller development of the same thought. The king is the son of God, begotten on the day when he was anointed. Thus far, if no farther, can the psalmist see into the mystery of Messianic glory. If David could call God his father with confidence, in a more emphatic way the king

¹ 2 Sam. vii.

² Psal. lxxxix. 26, 27.

is now to be regarded as the Son of God.¹ For the psalmist sees that he must be the Son of God in some peculiar and pre-eminent relationship, higher and closer than that on account of which any other man can look upon God as his Father. It is difficult not to feel that the doctrine of the divinity of the Messiah must be the natural outcome and completion of this thought, though the poet who first conceived it may have been far from grasping the definite idea of an incarnation, which lies at the foundation of the creeds and confessions of Christendom.

¹ The psalmist is evidently writing with the reigning monarch in his view. But he identifies him with the Messianic ideas, as the whole current of the psalm bears witness. The Chaldee Targum applies the psalm to the Messiah, and this interpretation met with the approval of the Rabbis.

***THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC
PROPHECY, FROM SAMUEL TO
THE CAPTIVITY (continued).***

*There is a bondage which is worse to bear
Than his who breathes, by roof, and floor, and wall,
Pent in, a tyrant's solitary thrall :
'Tis his who walks about in the open air,
One of a nation who, henceforth, must wear
Their fetters in their souls. For who could be,
Who, even the best, in such condition, free
From self-reproach, reproach which he must share
With human nature ?*

WORDSWORTH.

VII.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY, FROM SAMUEL TO THE CAPTIVITY (*continued*).

I. **I SAIAH.** In the eighth century before Christ prophecy flourished at its prime: in the middle of this century Isaiah, the greatest of all the prophets, appeared. The public life of Isaiah opened before the death of the good king Uzziah (about B.C. 759), and extended right through the weak reigns of Jotham and Ahaz and the long and glorious reign of Hezekiah, till he died in ripe old age through, as old traditions say, by violence in the dark days of Manasseh (about B.C. 695). During all this time—upwards of seventy years—Isaiah was the leading prophet, outshining his great contemporary prophets as Shakespeare eclipsed the great dramatists of his age. His was a rich, royal

soul, great all round, uniting in itself with equal excellence the three chief functions of a prophet, as preacher of righteousness, religious poet, and practical statesman. In no other prophet is the hope of Israel so fully developed or so urgently maintained. By a curious coincidence, the Book of Isaiah and the Gospel of John—the greatest works of the Old and New Testaments—have had to bear the severest attacks of negative criticism. But the result is not the same in both cases. While Strauss was so blind to the spiritual depth of the Fourth Gospel as to express unmeasured contempt for what he called “its platitudes,” the cold light of criticism has only revealed more clearly the sublime grandeur of the book which bears the name of Isaiah; so that the radical sceptic is compelled to concede two most important points:—first, that although the authorship of much of the book may be questioned, enough remains undisputed to maintain the supremacy of Isaiah as the greatest of the prophets; and secondly, that the portions of disputed authorship contain some of the grandest utterances of Scripture, the inherent value of

which is little affected by the controversy as to their origin. I think we may claim these admissions as a great set-off against the confusion and perplexity which the critics have stirred up around the dates and authorship of large parts of the book. Standing on the ground unanimously yielded to us, we may give due weight to the Messianic prophecies of the Book of Isaiah without entangling ourselves with the discussion of the authenticity of its several portions. As yet the negative critics have failed to provide us with an authoritative manual of dissection. Each writer seeks to justify his claim to enter the field by starting some fresh scheme of partition, which only waits to be demolished by its successor, and that in turn by another equally ingenious and equally problematical. It is therefore a relief to turn from these wearisome contests of imagination to the tangible prophecies themselves and their immortal ideas. The method I shall follow will be first to consider the unquestioned prophecies of Isaiah, and then to take separately

the most important of the prophecies of disputed authorship.

As we survey the wide field of the undoubted Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, it will be apparent that they sum up the results of older prophecy, and add to them important features of their own. We may arrange these under four heads. 1. Prophecies of the circumstances which were to precede and usher in the Messianic era. 2. Prophecies concerning the Messianic king. 3. Prophecies descriptive of the leading features of the Messianic age. 4. Prophecies defining the area of Messianic blessing.

The prophecies introductory to the Messianic era claim our attention first.

The first chapter, though probably not composed till after Hezekiah's imperfect reformation, is a fitting introduction to the whole book. It contains the "arraignment" of the nation. The people are solemnly summoned before the bar of the great Judge and charged with utter and abominable wickedness, too great by far to be concealed by the cloak of formal penitence.

They are told that the devastation wrought by the Assyrian armies is a necessary chastisement, which must be followed by an overwhelming doom unless they give evidence of genuine repentance. Nevertheless they are assured that the final outcome of this chastisement will be to cleanse out the dross and leave Jerusalem "a centre of righteousness, a faithful city." At the very commencement of his mission, in what is probably his first recorded utterance, Isaiah had no sooner read as the text of his discourse the glowing prediction of an earlier prophet about the universal and everlasting peace which was to follow the judgment of the nations, and the established supremacy of the house of the Eternal at the end of the days,¹ than his eyes fell from this glorious vision of the future to the shameful sight of present corruption, at which he broke out suddenly into a torrent of denunciation. Then he repeated the threats

¹ Isaiah ii. 2-4. Ewald agrees with Hitzig in naming Joel as the probable author of this prophecy, but this is wholly a matter of conjecture. See Ewald, "Prophets and Prophecies," vol. ii. p. 22.

which earlier prophets had so often used, about the "day of the Eternal," when doom would fall on the guilty; and thus he showed that the age of blessings must be deferred till the people were prepared for it by a season of trial and repentance. Again, when the weak Ahaz had determined to apply to the king of Assyria for assistance against the threatened attacks of Rezin and Pekah, the kings of Damascus and Samaria, Isaiah renounced the folly of this suicidal policy. Though he promised the destruction of the neighbouring foes so much dreaded by the king, and predicted the final triumph of the Messiah, he threatened sad troubles to Judah as a punishment for her distrust of God and iniquitous alliance with the great oppressor.¹ Once more, in the reign of Hezekiah, after the Assyrians had partly fulfilled this threat by laying waste the country districts, and the people were abandoning themselves to shameless riotous rejoicings on the conclusion of a dishonourable peace, the prophet came for-

¹ Isaiah viii. 5-8.

ward with the warnings of far greater troubles with Assyria. Above all, while Jerusalem, like Paris in later times, was regarded with superstitious pride as necessarily inviolable, Isaiah went so far as to predict the overthrow of the city itself.¹ In opposition to the party in favour of an Egyptian alliance, and the foolish populace that stopped its ears against any but smooth, deceitful prophecies,² Isaiah threatened certain, fearful defeat.³ And later, after the Assyrian troubles were over, and the nation was enjoying quiet prosperity, when in a moment of weak vanity Hezekiah entertained the Babylonian ambassadors with the display of his riches, Isaiah predicted that Jerusalem would be conquered by Babylon and the sons of the king carried off as captives.⁴

Secondly, the chief interest of the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah centres in the Messiah Himself. Ewald says that Isaiah was the first prophet to arrive at and give the right shape

¹ Isaiah xxix. 1-6.

² Ibid. xxx. 1-7.

³ Ibid. xxx. 17.

⁴ Ibid. xxxix.

to the idea that the future elevation of the community could only be sustained by one Divine Ruler.¹ But we have seen evidences of the growth of this personal element of Messianic prophecy much earlier in the history of Israel.² It is, therefore, too much to say that Isaiah was "the author of this highest development of all Divine hopes." Nevertheless, if he was not its author, he was its chief advocate. He made it familiar by frequent forcible predictions. He found it little more than a vague shadowy idea of the throne of David ; he left it a clear promise of a coming King, a prophecy with a definite shape and many details of form and colour filled in.

In the first place, though Isaiah says little about the ancestry of the Messiah, that little is enough to show his belief that the great King would come in the line of David. We are told that He is to "sit on the throne of David,"³ and, in manifest reference to the Messiah, that

¹ Ewald, "Prophets," &c. ii. p. 5.

² See especially Psa. cx.

³ Isaiah ix. 7.

"there shall come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow from his roots." ¹

Isaiah opens his prophecies about the person of the Messiah with a remarkable prediction of His birth and childhood, as a sign for King Ahaz.² "Therefore the Lord himself give you a sign. Behold, the young woman conceives and bears a son, and she calls his name Immanuel (God with us). Cream and honey will he eat, when he will know to refuse the evil and to choose the good. For before the boy knoweth to refuse the evil and to choose the good, the land will be desolate before whose two kings thou art alarmed. The Eternal will bring upon thee and upon thy people and thy father's house days which have not come since Ephraim revolted from Judah—the King of Assyria."³ The ancient Jewish application of these words to Hezekiah is clearly wrong, as Jerome pointed

¹ Isaiah xi. 1. The Chaldee paraphrast renders this passage, "A *king* shall come forth," &c.

² Isaiah vii. 10-17.

³ Ibid. vii. 14-17.

out, because Hezekiah must have been nine years old when the sign was given.¹ It is very unlikely that the prophet is referring to a child of his own by a second marriage, as his allusions to his own children and their typical names are elsewhere clearly explained, and quite unlike this mysterious prediction. The supposition of a reference to a son of Ahaz by a second marriage, or the suggestion that the prophet predicts a birth from some woman who happens to be standing near when the sign was expounded, and all similar explanations, rest on gratuitous assumptions. On the other hand, there are several reasons for referring the prophecy to the expected Messiah. The serious, lofty tone of the language, the air of mystery and importance with which the child is surrounded, the emphatic reference to His birth, the name Immanuel—very significant when we take into account the Divine characteristics of the Messiah which had already been ascribed to Him by earlier prophets²—suggest the idea that there must

¹ See 2 Kings xvi. 2 ; xviii. 2.

² See Psa. ii. cx.

be something very wonderful about the origin and character and destiny of the child. And all these converging hints are confirmed and clenched by the later references of the prophet to the same child, in which He is clearly identified with the Messianic King.¹

But if this is a prophecy of the Messiah, in what sense was it uttered? If we consider the circumstances, it is scarcely possible to think that the prophet was simply predicting the birth of our Lord from the Virgin Mary, though we may feel that the truths it contains were only adequately realised by Jesus Christ, because this allusion to an event which was not to happen till seven centuries later could not be to Ahaz the sign which the prophet described. It is irrelevant to quote other instances of prophecies about distant events which have been given as signs, because the very words of this prediction bind it down most distinctly to the present. Ahaz, alarmed at the threatened invasion of Judah by the

¹ See Isaiah. viii. 8 ; ix. 6, 7.

kings of Samaria and Damascus, is foolish enough to tempt the interference of the terrible Assyria. Isaiah opposes this fatal policy, and promises the help of the Eternal if the people will reject it and trust in their true Deliverer. To strengthen the faith of the weak king, he offers him the choice of a sign of the Divine presence and power. Ahaz, in his unbelief, or perhaps dreading the confirmation of Isaiah's words as a proof of his own folly, declines the offer. Then Isaiah gives another sign—one which now comes from God to the king, whether he will have it or no. This sign is recorded in the words of the prophecy before us. As it is mysterious, the prophet interprets it. "A woman—young, but already adult, and therefore one who might have children—*shall* conceive and bear a son. Before this child is old enough to refuse the evil and choose the good—say at the age of ten or twelve years—Damascus and Samaria will be laid waste by Assyria, and Jerusalem will be saved from the pressing danger of the moment which troubles

Ahaz so much. But immediately after this Judah herself will suffer from the same hand ; her fertile fields will be ravaged, and her population will be reduced, so that arable land will relapse into a condition only fit for pasturage, and make it necessary for the child to live upon cream and honey — the product of pasture rather than the fruits of agriculture." Can anything more plainly refer to the immediate future than this explanation of Isaiah's ? Such a sign could only be accomplished in a contemporary event. Any other fulfilment of the prophecy would be useless for the particular purpose of the sign suggested by the prophet.

But if this be the case, how does this harmonise with the Messianic element of the prophecy ? All attempts to dislocate the phrases and appor-tion some to an obscure child who was about to be born, and others to the Christ of the future, are quite unwarranted and irrational. The conclusion to which I am driven is that Isaiah was referring to the Messiah, and to the Messiah exclusively, but that the prophet expected His

immediate advent, and so identified His birth with the birth of some child which was soon to happen, and which did happen in due time, though who this child was history does not tell us.¹ Hengstenberg argues that this interpretation is inconsistent with the idea, shared by all the prophets, that a dark calamitous time must precede the brilliant Messianic era; but the difficulty is imaginary, for, as Hengstenberg himself observes, Isaiah does predict this gloomy season in this very prophecy, only he puts it in the early days of the Messiah, before the "government had come upon his shoulders." This explanation is not inconsistent with the general characteristics of Messianic prophecy, for we have seen repeatedly that the prophets expected the near advent of the Messianic age. It is not inconsistent with the Divine inspiration of prophecy, for there are many reasons for believing that this did not extend to the objective and historical application of prophecy,

¹ See Dr. Payne Smith, "Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah," p. 306.

but left the prophets in the dark as to the times and purposes and circumstances of the fulfilment of their predictions, while it illumined their minds in reference to the ideal features of the future.

If this be the true explanation, of course the Messiah was not born at the time when Isaiah expected Him. Nevertheless, the prophecy is not invalid on this account. Its fulfilment was divided between the Messianic age and the near future, though the prophet identified these two eras. As far as it related to Ahaz, its general predictions were verified by the events of his reign, and we have no reason to doubt that the sign was completed in the birth and early experiences of the child. We know that the northern kingdom and its Syrian allies *were* conquered, and that Judah *did* suffer from an Assyrian invasion in the manner and at the periods indicated by Isaiah. But in connection with these transactions, Isaiah unfolded some of the truths of Messianic prophecy which justified a hearty confidence, though they were

not to be realised as soon as he expected. First, there is the mystery of the birth of the Messiah. It is true that the word "Almah," by which the mother of the child is designated, does not invariably describe a virgin, and yet it is generally used in Scripture in reference to virgins.¹ Probably the prophet was referring to one who was not married at the time he spoke, and though we cannot affirm that he contemplated a miraculous birth, still the reference to the "young woman" in a way not called for in a mere prophecy of an ordinary birth surrounds it with an air of mystery and importance, and

¹ חַמְלָה only occurs six times in the Bible. Twice it is applied to unmarried women without doubt (Gen. xxiv. 43; Exod. ii. 8) and twice most probably so (Psa. lxxiii. 25; Cant. i. 3), while in the two remaining cases (Cant. i. 8; Prov. xxx. 19) this application is at least as probable as the reference to married women. (See Prof. Alexander's "Com. on Isaiah," vol. i. p. 168.) The derivation does not help us much here. The word is variously derived by different critics. If the prophet intended to refer to a virgin distinctly and as such, it is difficult to understand why he did not use the less ambiguous word בְּתוּלָה. But, on the other hand, as Professor Alexander has shown, even this word is not invariably confined to its stricter meaning: e.g., see Deut. xxii. 19; Joel i. 8. Compare Dr. Payne Smith, "Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah," p. 24.

shows that Isaiah felt there would be something abnormal about the birth of the Messiah.

Moreover, the name of the child is most significant, and carries with it a prophecy of his Divine glory, for I cannot think that the whole meaning of the word "Immanuel" is absorbed in the truth that God is present with His people. Already we have seen adumbrations of a Divine rank and worship of the Messiah. Isaiah himself testifies to this in a later prophecy,¹ and therefore it seems to me most reasonable to conclude that the name "Immanuel" must have been intended to suggest not simply a "providential" Divine presence, but a peculiar personal Divine presence.

After this Isaiah repeatedly mentions the mysterious child. The land is called "Immanuel's,"² and because it is His, all in it shall be guarded by the presence of God.³ Once the thought of His advent lifts the prophet into the most exalted condition of rapturous ecstasy, and as he sees the child with His royal celestial

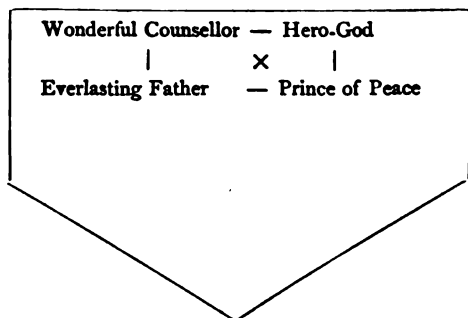
¹ Isaiah. ix. 6.

² Ibid. viii. 8.

³ Ibid. viii. 11-18.

glory about Him, he exclaims, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government cometh upon his shoulder, and they call his name, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,"¹ heaping up the very highest titles with which to honour the Messiah. The first pair of names relate to His character and nature: He is supreme and marvellous in wisdom; He is endowed with the might of the Divine nature. The attempt to explain away the force of the expression "Mighty

¹ Isaiah ix. 6. Ewald ("Prophets," &c., vol. ii. p. 109) has made the ingenious suggestion that these names are so constructed as to form the motto for a shield or banner, which might be read in various directions, and so bring out various combinations and relations of the attributes of the Messiah. He arranges them thus.



God," as though it only referred to the Godlike strength and not to the nature of the Messiah, puts a most unnecessary strain on the words ; although it would be absurd to say that Isaiah meant by these words all that St. Paul and St. John meant when they affirmed that greatest and latest doctrine of the New Testament—the doctrine of the full personal divinity of Jesus Christ. The second pair of names seem to relate to the rule of the Messiah. He will be an everlasting Father—governing with paternal affection and with an endless sway. He will be a Prince of Peace, and so bring in the golden age, the peaceful character of which is now familiar to us as one of its leading features.

Thirdly, when we consider the general characteristics of the Messianic times, as they are pictured by Isaiah, we find that all the separate items of earlier prophecy are gathered together and swallowed up in the rich sweeping visions of this truly "evangelical" prophet. We cannot attempt to follow the prophet in his flight through all these scenes of the wonderful future.

The coming age will dawn with a great light on the people who sit in darkness: ¹ Judah and Israel will then return from their captivity and be gathered again in their old home,² and Jerusalem will be a quiet habitation—the latter statement, however, rests on a disputed passage.³ War and tumult will be hushed, and the dread of the savage tyranny of the gigantic aggressive monarchies will no longer disturb the two nations, but universal peace will reign, and beneath its kindly influence the industries of prosperity will flourish.⁴ No danger will be possible, for the great King will extend His protection especially over the weak and helpless. A king will rule no longer for the sake of his own profit and glory, but the throne will exist for the maintenance of righteousness.⁵ Nor will the Messiah reign in lonely grandeur like a selfish heathen king: His glory will be shared by all His people.⁶ But above all these material blessings, the Messianic age will bring in every form of spiritual well-

¹ Isaiah ix. 2.² Ibid. xi. 10, 16.³ Ibid. xxx.⁴ Ibid. xi. 6; xxix. 17, 18.⁵ Ibid. xxxii. 1.⁶ Ibid. iv. 2.

being. The people will live with faith in God ;¹ they will be cleansed from their sins and made "separate and holy ;"² and, as Joel had already predicted, the spirit of God will be poured out upon them, producing great fruitfulness of character and life.

Fourthly, we have to note the area of the Messianic blessedness. Isaiah emphasises and amplifies the doctrine of the earlier prophets, that only "a remnant" could be saved from the general destruction which loomed in the near future—a doctrine which is symbolised by the name of one of the prophets' sons — Sheâr Jashûb (the remnant will be converted) — and repeated in the promises of deliverance from Israel and Syria, and from Assyria.³ Yet this is not the Calvinistic doctrine of the arbitrary election of a small and close spiritual aristocracy. The remnant is the salt of the earth, and the germ out of which a world-wide kingdom of blessedness is to grow. Judah as a whole

¹ Isaiah x. 20.

² Ibid. iv. 3 ; viii. 13 ; xxix. 23.

³ Ibid. vii. 3 ; viii. 11 ; x. 20 ; xi. 11-16 ; xxviii. 5.

will come at length to share in the highest privileges. The northern kingdom will be equally favoured, the old quarrel will be healed, and all the scattered will be regathered.¹ But the promise is not limited to Israel. Dark pagan nations, who have never yet known the true God, will enjoy the same privileges,² and what is most remarkable, on an equality with the Jews, so that there will be no distinction between the old select people and the Gentile nations. All will live in friendly intercourse as equally privileged subjects of the one Great Anointed King. Egypt, the ancient oppressor, and the new and fearful oppressor, Assyria—the two kingdoms between which it was the misfortune of the little land of Israel to lie as a natural battlefield—will be united in fraternal intercourse with the Jews.³ It is difficult to imagine the startling effect such a bold prediction must have made on the people who heard it for the first time. The alliance of Germany and France,

¹ Isaiah xi. 10-16; xxviii. 5, 6.

² Ibid. xxxv.

³ Ibid. xix. 19, 20, 23-25.

the union of England with Russia in the government of the East, the fraternal equality of negro and white man in the Southern States of America, the amalgamation of Mohammedan Turks with Christian Bulgarians, could all be realised with much less difficulty than this prediction. It is far more than the common prediction of the universal extent of the Messianic kingdom, which really meant, to the Jews, the universal supremacy of Israel. Selfish patriotism could glory in the 72nd Psalm. Only the spirit of Christian charity could assent to the cosmopolitan humanity of this prophecy of Isaiah's.¹

Omitting the disputed portions of the earlier section of the book, as having but slight bearing on the present inquiry, we come now to

¹ It is true the Jews were not so exclusive and narrow as they are often represented. They prided themselves on their birth, and yet they were not anxious to confine their privileges to the family of Israel. On the contrary, there were periods in their history when they were as eager to make proselytes as any Jesuit in our own day. But then it must be remembered that the very passion for proselyting implied the recognition of the Jew as the privileged centre of the true religious life.

the most important portion of disputed authenticity, viz., the last twenty-six chapters. The prophecy is before us, and for the purpose of the present argument it is not necessary for us to determine whether Isaiah was so far transported in spirit to the atmosphere of the captivity as to be able to write this discourse, or whether it must be assigned to an anonymous prophet of the latter age.¹ In either case we have the prophecy itself, and in either case its Messianic drift is the same.

It is universally admitted that these chapters form one composition ; for, as has been well said, "the whole flows on like a river, poured forth at one time from a heart entirely possessed and filled by the Holy Spirit." The poem is one great prophecy of the restoration of Israel, and the consequent Messianic blessedness of the world. This single comforting theme returns again and again, either as the leading note or as a deep undertone, like the movement of a fugue, and the whole poem does not take the form of a

¹ See Dr. Payne Smith, "The Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah," p. 90 *et seq.*

progressive argument, but stands before us as one glorious vision, unfolding itself now on this side and now on that, and always revolving round the same truths. The usual Messianic pictures are repeated with unwonted fervour. First, the Jews are to be restored, and the heathen are to come out of their deep darkness to the Great Light of Israel. "And nations shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising." Secondly, this deliverance is to be effected by the might and mercy of God, and of God alone, though He will use human instruments. "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was none to interpose. Therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness, it sustained him." Thirdly, Cyrus is to be a chosen instrument in the hands of God for the restoration of Israel. The prophet speaks of him as God's servant and God's anointed. We must not suppose that this Gentile monarch is identified with the long-expected Messianic king of Israel, who was always pictured as a Jew by birth, a descendant

of David, and in every sense a Hebrew monarch. But Cyrus was *a* Messiah, because he was chosen by God to deliver the people of Israel from the Babylonian oppression. A man of a singularly noble and kindly character, professing a religion the purity and spirituality of which must have contrasted strangely with the bestial idolatries of Babylon, this great king swept down from the hardy North, over the enervated tyrannies of the South, with a tide of conquest which was hailed by the subject races as a welcome deliverance. While the eyes of Israel turned wistfully to Cyrus for the hopes his enlightened policy held out, it was natural that the older, deeper hope of the ideal king should be temporarily superseded. Accordingly, throughout the whole prophecy we do not meet with a single reference to the throne of the anointed Son of David.

But the most interesting parts of this great prophecy are those which relate to the mysterious servant of the Eternal, and in which the trumpet blasts of the glorious triumphant march die away into a plaintive wailing dirge, giving us

the most beautiful but most mournful poetry in the Bible, or, indeed, in all literature. The servant of the Eternal is a chosen one in whom God delights, inspired by the Divine Spirit to send forth judgment to the nations. In manners he is quiet and suasive. "He shall not cry aloud . . . he shall not let his voice be heard in the streets." In conduct he is gentle and merciful. "A bruised reed he will not break, and a dim wick he will not quench." He will be victorious. Even the distant islands wait for His law. He will "act wisely, and rise, and be exalted high exceedingly."¹ Yet His appearance is sad, and many are shocked. His beginning is feeble, like a tender plant. "He had no form or comeliness." He is "a man of sorrows," and the sorrows He endures are the burdens of the sufferings and sins of His people. He suffers and dies in silent patience. His "soul is made an offering for sin." But after this "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Eternal in his hand shall prosper. He shall see the labour of

¹ Isaiah xl

his life enough to satisfy him. By his knowledge as a righteous one, he will give righteousness to many, and he will bear their iniquities. Because he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors, God will divide him the spoil among many.”¹

Who is this servant of the Eternal? Cyrus is elsewhere designated “my servant,” but it is simply impossible to suppose that the strange spiritual experience described in the fifty-third chapter could be assigned to the Persian conqueror. Innumerable conjectures have been formed by imaginative critics. Besides Cyrus, Abraham, Moses, Josiah, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, an unknown prophet, the writer of the prophecy, the prophets as a body, the collective priesthood, the royal house of David, the captive nobles and the family of the Maccabees, have all been suggested. It seems to be considered in some quarters an honourable mark of originality, conferring a right to pose as an independent investigator for some unknown writer to come

¹ Isaiah lii. 13; liii.

forward with a new theory about this mysterious title; and it must be confessed that the subject does afford unlimited scope for inventive originality, since it is difficult to deny that many scores of names might be adduced on grounds as valid as any claimed in support of those names which have been already proposed. But it is unworthy of the great prophecy to play with it as if it were a curious literary puzzle, like the famous questions as to the identity of the Man in the Iron Mask and the authorship of the Letters of Junius. All these wild guesses lie outside the field of argument, for the simple reason that they are so devoid of all evidence that it is as difficult to refute them as to confirm them. There remain the theory of a reference to the Messiah and the explanation, now growing in favour, that the prophet is thinking of the spiritual Israel. All the old Christian and Jewish commentators are in favour of the application to the Messiah. It has in its support the very ancient testimony of the Jonathan Targum—a paraphrase certainly written before

the time of Christ—where the thirteenth verse of the fifty-second chapter begins, “Behold my servant the Messiah shall prosper,” &c. And that this interpretation was generally accepted by the older schools, is admitted by later Jews, who, according to Gesenius, were no doubt led to give up the earlier interpretation by polemic opposition to Christianity.¹ Though the Jonathan Targum—the earliest known commentary—must have been written hundreds of years later than the original prophecy, and after the Messianic tradition had been greatly modified through long ages of weary expectation, the pre-Christian reference of the words to the Messiah is not without weight. Then the mysterious dignity and favour and unqualified praise of the servant of the Lord make it difficult to think that the spiritual Israel could be honoured in language of such unqualified praise. The achievements of the servant of the Lord far exceed anything that the best of the prophets and devout people could do. Thus,

¹ See Gesenius, “Commentary,” vol. ii. p. 161 ; Hengstenberg, “Christology,” vol. i. pp. 292-294.

for example, we are told this servant is "to open blind eyes, to bring out from prison the bondman, from the house of confinement the dwellers in darkness." Above all, the bearing of sin described in language which the Jew must have associated with his doctrine of sacrifice and the vicarious character of the sufferings recorded in the fifty-third chapter, cannot be ascribed to the most devoted martyrs and patriots without a suggestion of exaggeration which would not be in keeping with the subdued, mournful tone of the language employed. The whole description of the servant of the Eternal in the forty-second and fifty-second and fifty-third chapters is so definite and precise that we should naturally ascribe it to a single person at the first reading.

I do not quote here the New Testament explanation of the prophecies, and I do not refer to the wonderful fulfilment of them in the sufferings and work of Christ, not because these do not show the Christian significance of these prophecies—they do show it most conclusively—but because this significance belongs to their

fulfilment, and does not give us any light on the original intentions of the prophet. The internal evidence of the language of the prophet must decide this point, and it does show much in favour of the application of the words to the Messiah.¹

On the other hand, it is urged that the whole conception of a suffering Messiah is foreign to ancient Jewish thought. The ideal of sorrow we do meet with, but nowhere is this identified with the Messiah. The presumption is thus raised against a reference to the Messiah, though of course these very passages would establish the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, if they could be proved on independent grounds to point in that direction. But further, it is urged that these passages about the servant of the Eternal contain no allusions to the throne of David, no references to the peculiar royal and family relationship which is usually associated with any mention of the Messiah. If the Messiah is here referred to, we have not only to account for the

¹ See Dr. Payne Smith, "The Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah," pp. 192-222.

remarkable fact that a very unusual descriptive appellation is used,¹ but to explain the much more remarkable fact that all the normal titles and characteristics of the Messiah are passed over in silence. If the prophet is thinking of the Messiah, why does he not name Him? If he is describing the son of David, why does he not call him the son of David? Moreover, the expression, "the servant of the Eternal," is applied to the people and not to their king in nearly all the passages where it occurs, and in all the passages where any attempt is made to identify the name by any form of explanation, except in the passages referring to Cyrus by name. This is admitted by those who contend for a new and special meaning of the phrase in the three passages in which no such reference to Israel is expressly stated, and where they think the ideas of the prophecy point to the Messiah. Thus nearly all the commentators who hold that

¹ It cannot be said, however, that the Messiah is never called "the servant of the Eternal." He is distinctly called "David my servant" in Ezekiel xxxvii. 24, and "my servant the sprout" in Zech. iii. 8.

the servant is the Messiah in the first verse of the forty-second chapter, where we read, "Behold my servant: I will hold him fast; my chosen one, in whom my soul delights," &c., consider that Israel must be the servant in the nineteenth verse of the very same chapter, in which the Eternal says, "Who is blind like my servant, and deaf like my servant?" &c. And this is expressly affirmed of the servant in the first verse of the forty-fourth chapter: "And now hear Jacob my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen."

If the same name occurs again and again throughout the prophecy, and in most cases is expressly identified with the people or with Cyrus, and if in three exceptional passages in which it is not identified the application is left open, with no attempt to apply it to any other persons, it is said, and with much force, Is not the inference most reasonable that here, too, the people must be meant, unless there is something in the ideas of the prophecy itself so manifestly unsuitable to the condition of Israel, that

it could not have been so applied by the prophet?

Now there is much in the contents of the prophecy which forbids us to apply the name to the people generally. The Jews are repeatedly rebuked and urged to repentance, and described in very different language from that which is applied to this servant of the Eternal. But the expression is not so entirely unsuitable to the true spiritual Israel, the remnant which remained faithful in the midst of almost universal corruption, and had to mourn in the captivity sorrows which it shared with the general body of the people, although without deserving them. All we can say for certain is that the prophet had in his mind some person, or class of people, to whom he ascribed the ideal of sorrow, and through this sorrow expected the accomplishment of the redemption of the nation. On the whole it seems most likely that he was thinking of the spiritual Israel. If, however, it is impossible to say in what direction he turned for the realisation of his ideas, we have really

no sufficient grounds for a decided identification of the servant of the Eternal.

But if we concede this much, and allow that the references to the servant of the Eternal might point to the "spiritual Israel," or to any one but the Messiah, can we still see in them any Messianic prophecy? I think we can, and therefore it seems to me that the essential value of them is untouched by the attacks of negative criticism. Messianic prophecy is larger than the prediction of an anointed king, and many utterances which have no reference to the Messiah personally are still Messianic because they portray the great ideal of Israel. It is said, indeed, that if the servant of the Eternal is the spiritual house of Israel he cannot also be Christ, and therefore these prophecies—the most precious of all the supposed predictions of Christ—must lose their unequalled value. But I have tried to show that we have no reason to ascribe to the prophets a power of forming an objective knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is therefore out of the question to ask whether they were uttering pre-

dictions of Jesus Christ. The only connection of our Lord with any prophecy is a question of its fulfilment. Nothing that the most adverse criticism has produced touches the wonderful historical fact that these prophecies were realised and fulfilled by our Lord with a fulness and exactness such as perhaps is more striking than in the fulfilment of any other predictions—and that they never were accomplished in any other way. But this does not imply that they were referred to the Messiah by the prophet. The thought of the Messiah and the history of Jesus are logically distinct, though as Christians we may believe that they are historically united. In many other cases predictions which were not connected by their authors with the traditionary hope of a Messiah may be found in later times to have met their true and perfect accomplishment only in the life of Christ.

A fair consideration of these prophecies about the servant of the Eternal will show that they are really Messianic. They do refer to the mighty hope of Israel; and the special work of

the servant of the Eternal is to assist in the realisation of this hope by the wonderful means of vicarious suffering. True, the prophet may have anticipated this in his view of the sufferings of the pious people of Israel, and no doubt the sufferings of these people did have some such beneficial influence. But the work of redemption was only done very imperfectly. In this prophecy we meet the *ideal* of vicarious suffering, as we see in the 72nd Psalm the ideal of regal glory. The psalm may have been written by Solomon with reference to himself, but if so, Solomon must have been imagining an ideal, because more was said of him than could ever be accomplished by an earthly king. Thus the psalm was Messianic, and awaited its full realisation in the perfect times. In the same way, if these prophecies were written with reference to the faithful suffering remnant of Israel, it is clear that the faithful people are here *idealised*, because more is said of them than could ever be accomplished by merely human martyrs and confessors; and therefore these prophecies also

are Messianic. They could not be accomplished until some perfect "Man of sorrows" endured the mystery of suffering and bore the sins of the people so thoroughly as to conquer evil by the sacrifice of Himself. This was certainly recognised by the Jews in later times, at least in the famous passage in the Targum of Jonathan : "Behold, my servant *the Messiah* shall do wisely," &c. ; and we can well understand how they would be driven to expect the fulfilment of the prophecy in the Messiah when history had made it apparent that it could be looked for in no other direction. The cross may have appeared at first apart from the Christ who was to suffer on it, and if so, later ages may only have learnt by degrees that the Son of David is also the Man of Sorrows. Nevertheless, if we grant all this, the primary signification of the great ideal of vicarious suffering still claims our attention as a revelation of the highest value—a strange development in the picture of the perfect times and the things necessary to their realisation such as had never before been set

forth with anything approaching the same distinctness and emphasis. The sufferings described in the 22nd Psalm, and the idea of service and sacrifice contained in the 40th Psalm, prepared the way for it by hints of the deeper truths it contains. Here for the first time these wonderful truths are expressed in their full beauty and power. The mystery, the pathos, the glory of the *via dolorosa*, are now and henceforth to be associated with the Divine method of redemption as the only *via sacra* through which the Messianic triumph is to be accomplished.

II. *Micah*. (B. C. 724.)¹ While Isaiah was prophesying in the court of Hezekiah, his grand utterances found an echo in the teaching of the homely Micah in the country districts of Judæa. And yet it was more than an echo, for though Micah followed in the footsteps of the great prophet, and taught the same truths, there is a vigour and originality about his writings which

¹ See Davidson, "Introduction," vol. iii. p. 284; Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. iv. p. 197; and "Prophets," &c. vol. ii. p. 289.

show that he was himself a true teacher sent from God. His mission in relation to Messianic prophecy was peculiar. It was as much to expose the delusive hopes of his time as to establish the right basis of confidence. His indignation was roused at the sight of false prophets, who denied the threatened judgment, and flattered the great instead of rebuking their vices, and promised the immediate advent of the times of peace and prosperity. In these prophets we see a perversion of the hope of Israel, which furnishes conclusive evidence of the hold which that hope had acquired over the popular mind. The spurious Messianic prophecy is an accommodation to the lower aims and baser characters of the people, who, naturally enough, coveted the pleasant future without the necessary sacrifices involved in the attainment of true happiness. This is not only false as a prediction, it is false morally, because it is based on a corrupt and vicious principle. By denying the necessity of a season of judgment, and ignoring the present depravity of the people, while promising the near advent

of the golden age, these men robbed the Messianic idea of its *moral* basis. Therefore their false prophecies were not only delusions; they were poisonous doctrines. As such, Micah sternly denounced them. The judgment, he said, must come first, for the people are wicked, and the holy God cannot give them true blessedness until they have been chastened into repentance. The Messianic age must be an era of holiness. Its blessings will grow out of a right relation between the people and their God, which must be established before they can be enjoyed. Thus it was the distinctive mission of Micah to introduce a reform into the popular Messianic ideas of his time.

But though he tore the immoral delusions of the flatterers to shreds and tatters, and denounced a sure approaching judgment on the nation, he too had his Messianic prophecy to utter, higher, purer, and more spiritual in its character, and therefore more tardy in its fulfilment, which was yet quite certain to come in due time, and, when it came, to bring far greater

blessings than could be conceived by the low, worldly imaginations of false prophets. He establishes his position on the basis of the great teachers of an earlier age by quoting the same familiar prediction with which Isaiah commenced his Messianic prophecies.¹ He has also his own inspired predictions to utter. He says that the Messiah is not to rise in the capital and the court, but in the country town of Bethlehem-Ephratah, and to "go forth as a ruler over Israel on behalf of the Eternal."² "His origin is from antiquity, from primeval days"—an obscure hint of his mysterious Divine origin to which we have found allusions in Micah's great contemporary. Micah teaches that the glorious Messianic age will be especially a time of comfort for the weak. He repeats the familiar doctrine of "the remnant," but, like Isaiah, he represents this remnant as the seed of a world-wide community in which all the scattered are to be restored.³

The quiet evening of Hezekiah's eventful reign was followed by a wild tempestuous night.

¹ Micah iv. 1.

² Ibid. v. 2.

³ Ibid. iv. 6, 7.

His son Manasseh strained every nerve to overthrow the true religion of Israel and reduce the nation to the condition of the heathen countries. Before the cruel blast of persecution prophecy itself was almost silenced, and the Messianic idea nearly quenched in disappointment. Clearly Micah was right. The flattering prophets were convicted of falsehood. The Messianic era had not come, but its very opposite.

III. *Nahum*.¹ The prophet Nahum seems to have lived during these dark times. He added little to the Messianic hope, but he prepared the way for the age of peace by predicting the overthrow of the fierce power of Assyria, and describing the joy of Jerusalem when the feet of the messengers of the good tidings of her oppressor's destruction should appear on the neighbouring hills.²

IV. *Zephaniah*. (B.C. 630.) With the accession of Josiah the hushed voice of prophecy broke out again in stronger and more hopeful

¹ The divergence of opinion as to the date of Nahum is very wide. See Davidson, "Introduction," vol. iii. p. 295.

² Nahum i. 15.

notes. Before the king had completed his vigorous reformation, the prophet Zephaniah came to his aid with a higher spiritual method.

Bucer says: "If any one wishes to see all the secret oracles of the prophets given in a brief compendium, let him read through this brief Zechariah."¹ The book opens with a general denunciation of judgment on the apostate people,² which is followed by a call to repentance.³ But the model prophecy would not be complete without its final crown, the Messianic promise which Zephaniah depicts in colours of great beauty. First, the heathen oppressors are threatened with doom and destruction.⁴ Then, after another severe rebuke for her present depravity, Jerusalem receives the promise of final restoration.⁵ But the good things are not to be confined to the Jews. Like Isaiah, Zephaniah promises that the heathen nations shall be converted, and "call upon the name of the Eternal." Their conversion is to be followed by a most remarkable result to Israel. "For

¹ Keil, "Commentary," vol. ii. p. 123.

² Zeph. i.

³ Ibid. ii. 1-3.

⁴ Ibid. ii. 4, 5.

⁵ Ibid. iii. 8.

then will I turn to the nations a pure lip, that they may call upon the name of the Eternal, to serve him with one shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Cush will they bring my worshippers, the daughters of my dispersed ones, as a meat-offering to me." ¹ The pure lip cannot be an expression signifying the clearness of God's voice addressed to the nations, because the word rendered pure ² carries with it the notion of that which was impure and has been cleansed. Therefore the expression must refer to the purity of confession with which the nations will call on the name of the Eternal.

Further, in the tenth verse we have the remarkable promise that these converted heathen will be the means of restoring the Jews to their home and the worship of their God. This is the first instance we have met with of a prophecy of the spiritual recovery of Israel through the instrumentality of the converted Gentiles; it was still unfulfilled when Paul repeated it with renewed energy; ³ and even now it waits its

¹ Zeph. iii. 9, 10.

² בְּרוּרָה

³ Rom. xi. 1.

accomplishment in the full advent of the kingdom of heaven.¹

Zephaniah repeats the familiar prediction of "the remnant who are to be spared in the general destruction."² His comforting assurances to the weak and afflicted are among the most beautiful descriptions of the great future in which the old Jewish law of the survival of the fittest is to be superseded by the higher Christian law of the redemption of the lost.³ He is especially earnest in insisting on the moral features of the future blessedness. He throws in the promise of the return from the captivity in a single verse at the tail-end of his book, like the afterthought of a postscript. But he expatiates fully and in glowing language on the spiritual recovery of the people in the main body of his prophecy. They will abandon their pride, and will come as a people bowed down and

¹ This prophecy refers to the spiritual restoration of Israel through the influence of Gentiles who were first spiritually serving "the Eternal." Therefore it was not fulfilled by the restoration under Cyrus.

² Zeph. iii. 13.

³ Ibid. iii. 18, 19.

needy to trust in the Eternal.¹ Wrong-doing and deceit will be repudiated;² and to heathen as well as to Israelite the age of rest and security will be characterised by sincerity of worship.

V. *Habakkuk*. (B.C. 606-604.) The prophet Habakkuk appears to have lived in the reign of Jehoiakim, when the kingdom of Judah presented a fairly good moral aspect, and while the reforms of Josiah were still effecting their encouraging though unhappily only temporary benefit. Yet his one grand prophecy is chiefly occupied with denunciations of judgment. He was inspired to threaten the degenerate people of Judah with a Divine chastisement through the invasion of the Chaldæans. But, like all the greatest of the prophets, he shows that the dark doomsday is not hopeless, and he unites with his predecessors in a comforting prediction of the light at eventide. He sees the vision of doom, but he is taught to wait patiently for the end. In the midst of the terror and desolation he declares that "the just man shall live by his faith,"³

¹ Zeph. iii. 12.

² Ibid. iii. 13.

³ Hab. ii. 4.

- and that his patience will be rewarded by the return of God's favour. With Habakkuk this
- favour is connected with the judgment and destruction of the enemies of Israel rather than with the establishment of universal peace and joy. The chastisement of Israel is to be ended and avenged by the overthrow of Babylon. It is true that he quotes Isaiah's prediction of the universal spread of the knowledge of the Eternal ; but he does so with a significant alteration, so as to bring it in harmony with his own sterner teaching. While the evangelical prophet promises a time of universal blessedness, in which all nations should enjoy the knowledge of God, Habakkuk only promises a time of Divine judgment, in which these foreign nations shall know the glory of God in so far as they see it revealed in His awful triumph over themselves. The dread triumph of "the Eternal" is proclaimed in trumpet notes and under the image of a vast thunderstorm in the grand "Pindaric ode" with which the prophecy closes. All this terror and glory and might are to be exercised

for the deliverance of the people of God. "In fury thou walkest through the earth, in wrath thou stampest down the nations."¹ But for what purpose? "Thou goest out to the rescue of thy people, to the rescue of thine anointed one."² The anointed one is to be rescued and the rescuer is the end of the great theophany. It is more probable that the prophet is here referring to the future Messiah than to the present reigning monarch, as the name "Messiah" was now familiar in the mouths of the prophets. In the assurance of this final triumph the prophet finds courage to meet the approaching calamities which must come first, and he even exults in his hope. "But I, in the Eternal will I rejoice, will shout in the God of my salvation."³

As the religious reforms of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah had not resulted in any permanent good, it is no matter of wonderment that the reformation of Josiah was no more successful. If it had been carried out in the best spirit, it must have been too late, as the nation was al-

¹ Hab. iii. 12.² Ibid. iii. 13.³ Ibid. iii. 18.

ready descending to ruin at headlong speed. But it was not carried out in the best spirit. Good as were the intentions of the king, there was little in the work of Josiah which tended to produce a spiritual reformation. Manasseh had pursued a course of savage persecution. Josiah endeavoured to mend matters by means of equally severe reprisals. But it was vain to think that the people could be brought back to the service of God by means of a violent external revolution. The inevitable consequence of this was a reaction, like that which followed the severe reforms of the Puritans in England; and then, after the last desperate attempt to save the nation had failed, nothing was before it but certain ruin. There were fanatics who still believed in their destined security, and clung to the hope that the sacred city could never be destroyed. But the true prophets saw that these dreams of safety were vain. To their sad gaze the Messianic age was retreating farther and still farther into the deep gloom of the future.

VI. *Jeremiah*. (B. C. 626.)¹ Jeremiah is the leading prophet during these dark days of impending doom—"the evening star of the declining days of prophecy."² Few prophets had a more irksome task to perform, or a more troubled life to endure. With a heart of almost womanly tenderness and affection for his people, he was called to set his face like brass against them. The bravest patriot of his day, he was forced to act in a way which led men to hate him as a perfect traitor. Jeremiah knew that the Divine chastisement could not now be averted. He saw that all resistance to the overwhelming flood of the Babylonian conquests, such as the decayed, corrupt nation could offer, would be worse than useless. He recognised the only wise course, the only course which could possibly secure any mitigation of the calamity, in timely submission. Jeremiah's position

¹ This early date marks the commencement of the public work of Jeremiah (i. 1-3), but the most important period of his life centres about the time of the siege of Jerusalem (B. C. 588-586). See Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. iv. p. 248; and "Prophets," &c. vol. iii. p. 59; also Davidson, "Introd." vol. iii. p. 90.

² Ewald.

was as statesmanlike as it was unpopular. At the same time, it was the only position which was consistent with a due regard to those principles of Divine justice, according to which the theocratic government of Israel was maintained. Consequently a large part of his work consisted in the thankless task of demolishing the vain hopes of false prophets such as Hananiah, who declared that he had received an oracle announcing the destruction of the power of Nebuchadnezzar within two years.¹ This mission of Jeremiah resembled the work of the prophet Micah, who was called to dispel the false Messianic hopes of his age. But the task of Jeremiah in fulfilling it was incomparably more difficult, inasmuch as the earlier prophet only referred to distant dangers, so that his teaching might have been regarded by those who did not heed it as of more literary than practical interest, while the later prophet found himself on the fringe of the tornado of destruction. The Chaldæans were already in the land, and the

¹ Jer. xxviii.

tide of conquest was sweeping fast up to Jerusalem. His words, therefore, did more than enunciate a principle ; they advocated a policy.

But Jeremiah did not lose faith in the Messianic times because he felt that the advent of them must be postponed. On the contrary, his ominous predictions are frequently brightened by flashes of glorious prophecy, in which the ancient hope of Israel appears with the addition of new elements derived from original fountains of inspiration. In his earlier prophecies, spoken in the reign of Josiah, Jeremiah declared that if the people repented and returned to the Eternal in loyal obedience, the worst might yet be averted.¹ When this was too late, he never said that the calamity would be hopeless. Again and again the sternest sentence suddenly brightens with a proclamation of final forgiveness and redemption. He not only promises that the captivity will have an end ; he fixes this within a period of seventy years.² The restoration is promised by the prophet as early as the reign of

¹ Jer. iii. 12-19.

² Ibid. xxix. 10-14.

Josiah in the beautiful "Book of Consolation,"¹ and it is renewed in the days of Jehoiakim, before the battle of Carchemish.² It is repeated after this fatal event, with the definite prediction of the seventy years ;³ and it is re-echoed with even greater fulness in the reign of Zedekiah, when the prophet was most harshly persecuted, and the national outlook was most gloomy.⁴

This restoration, says Jeremiah, will be for Israel as well as for Judah.⁵

It will be accompanied by a judgment on the neighbouring nations, who had joined hands with the Chaldæan invaders,⁶ and to them doom and ruin are threatened.⁷ Yet Jeremiah echoes Isaiah's grand prediction of the ultimate conversion of all these people. "The heathen will come from the ends of the earth," renouncing their idolatry, and seeking the knowledge of the Eternal.⁸

Jeremiah draws his own characteristic picture

¹ Jer. xxx. 8.

³ Ibid. xxix. 10-14.

⁵ Ibid. xxxi. 1-6.

⁷ Ibid. xxx. 11-16.

² Ibid. xii. 15 ; xvi. 14-21.

⁴ Ibid. xxxiii. 1-9.

⁶ Ibid. xxv. 15-21.

⁸ Ibid. xvi. 19-25.

of the condition of the people after the restoration. Probably he expected the Messianic times to follow immediately after the return from Babylon. Anyhow, he blends his pictures of the perfect future with his predictions of the near deliverance. It was not given to the prophet to discern the lengthy periods which were to intervene between the fulfilment of the various parts of his prediction, which he fused in one picture.

Jeremiah renews the promise of the anointed King who is to rule in righteousness as the true shepherd, in contrast with those bad shepherds, the corrupt rulers of his own day, who are severally rebuked in a series of prophecies.¹ The Davidic origin of this true shepherd is duly recognised,² it is said that he will rule righteously, so that the people will be called by a new name, "the Eternal our righteousness."³

As to the condition of the people themselves

¹ Jer. xxiii. 5.

² Ibid. xxx. 9; xxxiii. 15.

³ This name must refer to the people, and not to the Messiah, because in the parallel passage, xxxiii. 16, it is clear that the name can only stand for the inhabitants of Jerusalem generally.

in the Messianic times, Jeremiah differs from the earlier prophets in being less satisfied with visions of material prosperity, and in dwelling more earnestly on the spiritual features of the glorious future. In his admonitory discourses the prophet warns the rich and strong and wise not to glory in their riches and strength and wisdom, because the true ground for confidence was in the righteousness and mercy of God.¹ He promised a restoration to the Holy Land, and with this secure possession and rich fertility.² But material prosperity formed but a small part of his Messianic picture, and came second to the promise of spiritual blessings. Jeremiah said that the people would be happy only through their trust in God.³ They would dwell in security through the righteousness of their Messiah when they were themselves righteous.⁴ They would then be truly the people of God, serving Him with one heart and fearing Him eternally.⁵ The perpetuity of the priestly

¹ Jer. ix. 23, 24.² Ibid. xxxii. 42-44.³ Ibid. xvii. 7, 8.⁴ Ibid. xxii. 6.⁵ Ibid. xxx. 9; xxxii. 36-41.

office is put on a level with the stability of the throne, as though the two were equally important.¹

But the most remarkable element of Jeremiah's Messianic prophecies is his prediction of the "new covenant." Hitherto there has been no indication that the prophets saw anything in the religious character of the Messianic times beyond the perfect development of the established priestly and prophetic systems. They evince no dissatisfaction with these ancient systems; they are only dissatisfied with the conduct of the people in relation to them. Jeremiah was the first to discern that the religion of Judaism itself was only temporary, and was destined to give place to a higher and more spiritual religion. Perhaps the failure of Josiah's reformation helped him to see that the true restoration of Israel could not be effected by any such external means, and thus prepared him to receive the wonderful revelation of the destined dissolution of the old covenant in favour of a new and better

¹ Jer. xxxiii. 17-22.

covenant.¹ Other prophets had described the happy future as a time of deliverance effected simply by the direct influence of God, or through the triumph of the Messiah. Jeremiah teaches this, but he goes farther, and discovers the sources of it in a spiritual revelation which is to effect nothing less than the abrogation of the external law of ordinances and the creation of an internal law of conscience.² "But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Eternal: I will put my law within them, and write it on their hearts."³ This new covenant is to be spiritual, universal, invincible, and eternal: spiritual, because it will be "in the heart,"⁴ and not merely in books—which, as Ewald remarks, are now so over estimated; universal, because all men shall know the Eternal from the least unto the greatest;⁵ invincible, because it will issue from the God who binds by His mighty laws sun, and moon, and stars, and the sea with its roaring waves;⁶ eternal, because

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31.² Ibid. xxxi. 32.³ Ibid. xxxi. 33.⁴ Ibid.⁵ Ibid. xxxi. 34.⁶ Ibid. xxxi. 35.

it is destined to endure as long as the restored Jews themselves.¹ It is impossible to estimate the immense importance of this prophecy. It is the first passage of Scripture which justifies us in dividing the Bible, and with the Bible the religious history of the world, into two distinct parts, making an Old Testament religion sharply distinguished from a New Testament religion; and it is the first and most striking description of the main difference between the two parts of the religion of the Bible—the outwardness of the one and the inwardness of the other. If Isaiah was the most Messianic prophet, Jeremiah was the most Christian.

VII. *Ezekiel*. (B. C. 593.)² Ezekiel was one of the first of the captives carried away to Babylon, and his mission was to cheer his fellow exiles by the waters of Chebar, as well

¹ Jer. xxxi. 36.

² Though Ezekiel began to prophesy before the destruction of Jerusalem (i. 1; iv. 16), his characteristic position is after that date, because his most important elegies belong to the later period. Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. v. p. 12, and "Propheten des A. B." ii. p. 328 *et seq.*; Davidson, "Introd." vol. iii. p. 132 *et seq.*

as to denounce the reckless folly and unrestrained licentiousness of the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem. In harmony with the spirit of true prophecy, he painted his Messianic pictures on the dark background of Divine judgment. But severe as are his rebukes, his promises are equally bright and strong.

Ezekiel renews the special predictions of the Messianic King. If the prophecies about the cedar which is to be planted on the high mountains of Israel,¹ and about the horn which is to bud forth,² may be referred to the house of Israel generally, there can be little doubt that the promise of the "good shepherd," who is to supersede the present "evil shepherds," must be a prophecy of the Messiah,³ and especially as this is followed by predictions about God's "servant David," who is to be a "a prince in the midst" of the people,⁴ and their "prince for ever."⁵

Nevertheless, though Ezekiel does predict the

¹ Ezek. xvii. 22-24.

² Ibid. xxix. 21.

³ Ibid. xxxiv.

⁴ Ibid. xxxiv. 24.

⁵ Ibid. xxxvii. 22, 24, 25. It should be noticed that the Messiah is here called the "servant of the Eternal," but then there is a distinct allusion to David.

advent of a Messiah, this personal element of Messianic prophecy is already receding into the background, and the condition of the people assuming a more prominent place.¹

Ezekiel describes the glorious future more ecclesiastically than any other prophet. Thus he predicts the restoration of Israel in his vision of the valley of dry bones;² and then he draws an elaborate picture of the enlarged and glorified temple and temple services;³ after which there follows a description of the Holy Land and the Holy City in their new Messianic splendour. The images of the stupendous temple and its gorgeous ritual take precedence over all other representations of the times of blessing. Still Ezekiel is the last prophet to rest satisfied with visions of material splendour. Evidently he regards all these as the vesture of a great spiritual glory. While Jeremiah sees the root of the Messianic blessings in the granting of a new covenant, which is to result in the reign of the

¹ See Schröder, "Commentary on Ezekiel," *Introd.* p. 24.

² *Ezek.* xxxvii.

³ *Ibid.* xl.-xli.

law in the hearts of the people, Ezekiel looks for it in a special influence of the Divine spirit over the spirits of the people and in the renewal of their hearts.¹ The vision of the resurrection of the dry bones finds its climax in the inspiration of the Spirit of God.² In the promise of the out-pouring of the Spirit in a later prophecy, we have an echo of Joel's prophecy, with the addition of the deeper moral tone which colours the whole current of Ezekiel's teachings.³ Throughout the elaborate visions of the renewed city the true blessedness of its inhabitants is centered in their sanctifying and glorifying God.⁴

VIII. *Job*.⁵ There is one book belonging to this period which still remains to be examined, viz., the Book of Job. The studious care with which the author preserves the dramatic setting of the whole poem in Eastern Arabia, by excluding everything especially

¹ Ezek. xi. 19-20; xviii. 31.

² Ibid. xxxvii. 14.

³ Ibid. xxxix. 29.

⁴ Ibid. xx. 41; xxviii. 25; xxxix. 27.

⁵ See Davidson, "Introd." vol. ii. pp. 186-200, where the various opinions as to date and authorship are amply discussed. Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. iv. p. 277.

Jewish, prevents him from referring to the hope of Israel in its national Messianic character. Nevertheless, there are indications of the spirit of the larger Messianic ideas in the main drift of the argument, as well as in some rare words of inspired confidence which flash out from the midst of the mournful dialogue. The course of the narrative harmonises with the plan of prophecy, in which the troubles of the present and near future give place at length to the happiness of perfect restoration. The answer to one of the greatest problems of the book is inspired by the Messianic spirit. The stern contradiction which the inequalities of real life gave to the simple theory of the law, according to which temporal prosperity was to be regulated by conduct, pressed upon the minds of thoughtful Jews with increasing force the more they pondered over it. This difficulty furnishes the main theme of discussion throughout the Book of Job. The three Friends cut the knot by branding suffering innocence with a charge of hypocrisy.

But they are shallow, and foolish, and quite mistaken. Then Elihu shows that suffering is a needful chastisement, by means of which a good man is purged of his faults; and in the instance of Job himself, the writer of the book shows that this suffering is the source of a higher happiness, because it is a test of character. Have we not here an adumbration of that Divine mystery of sorrow, that secret of blessedness attained through suffering, which ultimately became an element in the great Messianic idea, and realised itself in the revelation of the cross?

In the course of the dialogue Job asserts his assurance of final deliverance in language of truly inspired prophecy,¹ and in the midst of his distress he cries :—

My Redeemer liveth,
And as the last one will he arise upon the dust,
And after my skin, thus torn to pieces,
And without my flesh shall I behold God,
Whom I shall behold for my good,
And mine eyes shall see him and no other.
Thy reins languish in my bosom.²

¹ Job xvi. 19.

² Ibid. xix. 25-27.

Two important points should be noted here. First—Whom does Job indicate by the word “Goel,” translated “redeemer” in the English Version? By some the “Goel” is represented as the avenger of blood familiar to the reader of the law;¹ but the word is more frequently used to denote the rescuer of the down-trodden and oppressed,² and the context shows that Job is looking forward not simply to the vindication of his character, but to his own deliverance. Therefore I take it that the “Goel” is not here an avenger, but a deliverer. Unquestionably the deliverer here referred to is God Himself,³ who will come, after all enmity has exhausted itself and all friendship has failed, as “the last one” on the scene, to redeem the sufferer.

Secondly—What is the hope of Job? It cannot be the hope of recovery to bodily soundness in this world. Job has passionately and repeatedly renounced the desire for life, and now

¹ Num. xxxv. 12. Job xvi. 19 might suggest this interpretation if the language of the text did not forbid it.

² Prov. xxiii. 11; Lam. iii. 58; Psa. cxix. 154.

³ Because of Job words in xvi. 19.

the dust on which the redeemer is to stand must be the dust of the grave, and he speaks of beholding God "without his flesh."¹ It seems, therefore, that we have here an expression of belief in future vindication and consequent satisfaction in the land of the dead. This doctrine must be distinguished from the later Jewish doctrine of the resurrection,² as Job only expects to be vindicated "without" his body. Still more, however, must it be distinguished from the Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which was never an opinion of the ancient Jews. Practically the doctrine of the resurrection comes nearer to the latter conception, as it carries with it the idea of full and vivid *eternal life*. This hope of Job's, however, is only for vindication and comfort in "Sheol"—the dim abode of ghosts and shades. Nevertheless, it

¹ וְיֵרָאָה עִמִּי מִבְּשָׁרִי may be translated, "and from my flesh," or, "and out of my flesh." The first meaning is most unlikely here, because with that signification the phrase would be superfluous. If Job said nothing to the contrary, he would be expected to see only by means of his body; but if he was expecting to see God *without* his flesh, this would be indeed a hope worth recording.

² Daniel xii. 3.

throws some brightness over that gloomy world in the prospect of the vision of God and deliverance from the calamities of the present life, and full vindication of innocence.

***THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC
PROPHECY, FROM THE RESTORATION TO
THE CLOSE OF PROPHECY.***

In times of peace the Church may dilate more, and build as it were into breadth, but in times of trouble it arises more in height: it is then built upwards, as in cities where men are straitened they build usually higher than in the country.—LEIGHTON.

VIII.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY, FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE CLOSE OF PROPHECY.

WITH the restoration we enter on the third and last era of Messianic prophecy. It was not an age to be compared with the magnificent eighth century for vigour of thought or poetic fervour of imagination. Nevertheless the great hope of Israel was now renewed and enlarged and spiritualised, and it now took a firmer hold on the national life. The general characteristics of the age powerfully affected the disposition of the people towards this eternal hope. The exiles returned with a stronger faith in their ancient religion, purged by the fierce chastisement from their once inveterate disposition towards idolatry. With deeper loyalty to the Eternal there came a truer conception of the inmost

nature of religion, in other words, more spirituality, and accordingly the Messianic hopes were now regarded more spiritually. The growth of religious experience enabled the people to grasp the purer thoughts involved in their old hopes, and the circumstances of the return inclined them more and more to turn towards internal sources of consolation. A feeble company of patriots, harassed by the malignity of jealous neighbours, and always under the shadow of the vast Persian empire, could not expect to restore the material splendour of the throne of David. To think of excelling it was absurd. The discipline of outward events thus came to aid the development of the thoughts of the people in the direction of more spiritual Messianic blessings. Further, the captivity had taught the people something of the higher meaning of suffering, and enabled them to understand something of the mission of suffering as part of the preparation for the Messianic times.¹ Whether

¹ Dean Stanley points out that the Hebrew word for the captivity, unlike the Greek word, expresses a bitter sense of

the last twenty-six chapters of the Book of Isaiah are to be considered authentic, or must be ascribed to some "great unknown" prophet of the exile, they could not have been well understood by the people generally before they found their commentary in the sufferings of the exile. Then the strange idea of vicarious suffering as the means for giving the highest blessings dawned on the minds of the true spiritual Israel.

But while the Messianic ideas were thus growing in spirituality they were also increasing in influence. This is the most characteristic note of the new age. The Messianic ideas were *popularised*. Hitherto they were the hopes of the prophets. Now they became the hopes of the people. Before the captivity it was only with the utmost effort that the prophets could call the attention of their hearers off the engrossing cares and pleasures of the moment to the approaching chastisement and the more remote glory beyond. But after the worst part

bereavement. It is "Guloth," which means literally "stripped bare." See "Jewish Church," vol. iii. p. 25. /

of the chastisement was over, and yet the nation was not at rest in its old home, these hopes were treasured as the one heritage of Israel, and became the guiding principle in all the chief political movements of succeeding ages. Before the captivity they were "in opposition." After the restoration they were adopted into the policy of the government. When they were misunderstood and degraded and secularised, as was too often the case, by worldly leaders or in the thoughts of the superficial populace, this perversion of them became the curse of Israel, and furnished a dangerous, inflammable delusion, which could only bring disappointment and disaster. But when they were accepted in their true and pure spirit, they became the inspiration of prophets and statesmen, and the comfort of the pious through the weary ages which still intervened before their final accomplishment.

Coming back to the events which followed immediately after the restoration, it is important to notice one important fact in relation to the condition of Messianic prophecy at that crisis.

There can be little doubt that the prophets had expected the advent of the Messianic times simultaneously with the return from the captivity. But now history had shown that this expectation was doomed to disappointment, for the happy times seemed to be as far off as ever. Yet the hope was not abandoned, it was only postponed and spiritualised under the influence of apparent failure. This remarkable fact is illustrated by the writing of the aged Haggai and his young contemporary Zechariah, both of whose utterances are dated in the same year—the second year of Darius Hystaspes and the sixteenth year after the captivity.

I. *Haggai*. (B.C. 521.)¹ The immediate purpose of Haggai's prophecy was to urge the people to more zeal in rebuilding the temple. The work had been undertaken with great energy, but the discouragement arising from the too true perception that the perfect times were still far off, and aggravated by the Samaritan interference, cooled the ardour of the returned

¹ Haggai i. 1.

exiles, and inclined them to be careless about their higher vocation, and to rest satisfied with the vulgar enjoyment of private domestic comforts. Then the first prophet of the restoration was called to rouse the slothful disheartened people. The importance of his exhortation to proceed with the work of building the temple may be seen in the great principle which inspired it—the principle that true blessedness could only be obtained by fidelity to the Eternal. Haggai encouraged the temple-builders by promising a greater glory for this new temple than the glory of the great temple of Solomon. The old prophet had seen the first temple: he could well understand how his companions in age wept when they compared the miserable appearance of the new building, erected by a handful of poor patriots in the midst of distress and discouragement, with the grandeur of that wonder of the world, with its marble and gold and cedar, on which all the wealth and labour of the kingdom in its palmiest days had been lavished. The fine pro-

portions, the elaborate artistic workmanship, the gorgeous decorations, the rich treasures of Solomon's temple, were all wanting; and, what was more melancholy from a religious point of view, the ark of the covenant, the central object of the ancient shrine, was lost for ever. Yet Haggai, knowing all this as well as any of the despondent patriarchs who had survived the weary captivity with him, distinctly promises a greater glory to the new temple. It is scarcely possible to find a more remarkable evidence of the inspiration of prophecy than this original prediction of the old prophet, which must have appeared as a perfect paradox to his contemporaries. He tells how God promises—
“I will shake all nations, and the costliest of all nations will come, and I shall fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.”¹ “The last glory of this house will be greater than the first, saith the *Lord* of hosts.”² Thus we have a promise of the future blessedness in the spiritual glory of the temple, rather than in the material

¹ Haggai ii. 7.² Ibid. ii. 9.

glory of Jerusalem. To this foreign nations are to minister, bringing their costliest gifts. And then in the temple, *i.e.*, through religion and not by temporal sovereignty, God will give that peace which is one essential element of the Messianic blessedness. Haggai offers this great encouragement to the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua, and to all the people who are engaged in the temple work. The special Messianic idea, however, the idea of a glorious king, is not here expressed, partly because the spiritual side of the future is now felt to be the most important, and partly because the splendour of the throne of David's great son is thrown into the shade, while the people are being tried and educated in a condition of political independence, and so prepared to understand the nature of true blessedness.

II. *Zechariah*. (B.C. 521.) Two months after Haggai had commenced his mission, the younger prophet Zechariah came forward with a similar object. He too blamed the present failings of the restored people,¹ and he too encouraged

¹ Zech. i. 4.

them to hope for a glorious future. But while Haggai devoted his attention to the honour of the new temple, Zechariah predicted the happy condition of the city of Jerusalem. This is the *first* leading characteristic of his Messianic prophecies.¹ He promises the return of the still scattered Israelites to their old homes,² and draws a charming idyllic picture of the peaceful city, with its old men leaning on their staves and children playing in the streets.³ But, in the *second* place, it is to be noted that Zechariah is not satisfied with this promise of material comfort: he adds a solemn joyous prediction of the righteousness and holiness of the city when it will be restored, and the Eternal will dwell in the midst of it.⁴ Though he does not refer to the honour of the temple with the emphasis of his aged brother-prophet, Zechariah repeats the prediction of some future mysterious glory belonging to it.⁵ In the vision of the accusation of Joshua the high priest, he sees Satan the

¹ Zech. i. 14; ii. 4; viii. 4.

² Ibid. viii. 7.

³ Ibid. viii. 4, 5.

⁴ Ibid. ii. 10, 11; viii. 3, 21.

⁵ Ibid. vi. 12.

accuser contending that the guilt and humiliation of Israel—typified by the filthy rags of the high priest, who is the spiritual representative of the people—must exclude them from the favour of heaven. But the accusation is resisted and defeated by the angel of the Eternal, and the filthy rags of Joshua exchanged for festal raiment, as a proof of forgiveness and renewed favour.¹ *Thirdly*, Zechariah extends the promise of Messianic blessedness to foreign nations.² He does not go so far as Isaiah, and predict the perfect equality of Jew and Gentile.³ He regards the heathen as attracted to the Jews, and saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."⁴ But he is very explicit in declaring the breadth of the area of the blessing. It will extend to "those far off,"⁵ to "many peoples and strong nations,"⁶ to men out of all languages of the nations, who will flock around the Jews in such numbers, that the

¹ Zech. iii. 1-5.² Ibid. ii. 11.³ Isa. xix. 19-25.⁴ Zech. viii. 23.⁵ Ibid. vi. 15.⁶ Ibid. viii. 22.

heathen converts will be to the Israelites in the proportion of ten to one.¹

Fourthly, Zechariah predicts the advent of a Messianic king, whom God calls in these prophecies "my servant the Sprout,"² a peculiar name, alluding to the revival of the decayed stock of David in the Messiah, which has been already applied to this coming king.³ There can be no doubt that Zechariah uses the name with the same meaning, because he says in a second prediction "the Spirit" is to build the temple, to rule in righteousness, and to be a priest. The last promise revives a rare Messianic characteristic, carrying us back to David's prophecy of the Lord who was to be "a priest after the order of Melchisedec."⁴ These prophecies of Zechariah about the coming ruler are particularly noteworthy, because they are the only post-exile predictions of the traditional Davidic Messiah.

Thus far I have referred only to the unquestioned prophecies of Zechariah contained in the

¹ Zech. viii. 23. ² Ibid. iii. 8. ³ Jer. xxiii. 5 ; xxxiii. 15.

⁴ Psa. cx.

first eight chapters of the book ascribed to him. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters, and the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters, form two distinct prophecies. There are many indications that both of these belong to the age before the exile. I shall not discuss this question, but simply keep the prophecies distinct from the undoubted writings of Zechariah, and point out their bearings on Messianic prophecy.

The first of these discourses is comprised in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the Book of Zechariah. The writer recognises the necessity of chastisement and repentance before the forgiveness of God can be enjoyed ; but he reverses the usual order, and describes the more joyous distant future before threatening the darker prospect which was in the near future. He distinctly promises the advent of a King who will be righteous and victorious, and yet lowly.¹ The reign of this lowly King will be signalised by the establishment of universal peace.² The exiles will return, and even such a distant people

¹ Zech. ix. 9.

² Ibid. ix. 10.

as the Ionians will be forced to give up the captive Israelites by a great battle in which the "Eternal" will join with weapons of lightning and tempest.¹ After this, God will gather His people as a shepherd gathers his scattered flock, and they will enjoy a royal estate, for "crown stones will glitter upon his ground."² Judah shall have especial honour in that glorious time.³ But Ephraim also shall share in the blessings. Though their greater sin will merit a heavier chastisement, in the *end*, after "Assyria's pride is cast down and Egypt's pride has departed," the Eternal will have mercy upon them, and bring them all home again.⁴

There is some uncertainty about the Messianic character of the second of these two prophecies.⁵ After predicting the repentance and forgiveness of Israel, the prophet represents God as saying, "Arise, O sword, over my shepherd, and over

¹ Zech. ix. 11-15.

² Ibid. ix. 16. This idea is parallel to Peter's description of Christians as "kings and priests," and St. John's vision in the Revelation of the crowned saints.

³ Ibid. x. 1-5. ⁴ Ibid. x. 10 *et seq.* ⁵ Ibid. xii. xiii. xiv.

the man who is my neighbour, is the saying of the Eternal of hosts: smite the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered, and I will bring back my hand over the little ones." ¹ There is force in Keil's remark that the expression "my neighbour" ² is an unlikely name to apply to the "foolish" and "worthless" ³ rulers referred to in the first of the two "burdens" of which the prophecies are composed. Nevertheless, if this prophecy was uttered before the captivity, such an allusion to a king would be so natural, that we should not be justified in going out of our way to find an allusion to the Divine "smiting" of the Messiah. ⁴ If then we have here a threat of the death of the king and of the scattering of the people through the Chaldæan invasion, this is not in itself Messianic; though, like other parallel events, it illustrates the great principle which is

¹ Zech. xiii. 7.

² עֲמִית.

³ Zech. xi. 15, 17.

⁴ It should be remembered that in the peculiar constitution of the Israelite government, as a Basileo-Theocracy, the human king was associated with the supreme Divine King by bonds of peculiar relationship, simply on account of his official position, and quite apart from his character and his personal spiritual relations with God.

more fully revealed in the death of our Lord, and therefore it is a prophetic type. But the specially Messianic portion of the prophecy is in the fourteenth chapter. The prediction of the times of blessing is ushered in by a sublime vision of redemption, which is to be effected on "the day of the Eternal,"¹ when God will appear standing on the Mount of Olives, and cleaving it from north to south, so as to make a highway for the return of Israel.² Then the enemies of Jerusalem will be smitten, even helping to destroy one another,³ while "the remnant" will return home in safety,⁴ after which the people will live in peace and security, and renew their worship of God with a sanctity so thorough, that "in that day there will stand upon the bells of the horses, Holy to the Eternal; . . . and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Eternal."⁵

IV. *Malachi*. (B. C. 460-450.)⁶ Just before

¹ Zech. xiv. 1.

² Ibid. xiv. 4.

³ Ibid. xiv. 12-15.

⁴ Ibid. xiv. 16-19.

⁵ Ibid. xiv. 20, 21.

⁶ Malachi must have preceded Nehemiah. Compare Mal. i. 8 with Neh. v. 14. See "Einleitung," 566, 567.

the governor Nehemiah was called to stimulate a revival of the people in external public affairs, the prophet Malachi was inspired to rebuke the corruption of morals which had crept into the community since the first return from Babylon. It is evident, from the pictures of the times of Nehemiah in this prophecy, as well as in the historical books, that instead of the Messianic age developing out of the restoration, as the patriots of that time fondly hoped, a melancholy process of religious decadence had set in. The last great prophet is occupied chiefly in rebuking and minatory teaching. The last words of the Old Testament are a curse. When he refers to the great days of the future, Malachi is silent as to the advent of an anointed King.¹ The decay of prophecy leads him to yearn rather for the return of the age of the great prophets. He predicts that

¹ There is no trace of the expectation of the anointed King of the house of David in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, or Malachi, or in any contemporary literature. Since the death of Zerubbabel the expectation of "the Messiah" was drowned in bewildering disappointment, though the Messianic ideas in the sense of hopes and promises for the future still exercised a most powerful influence. See Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. iv. p. 8.

prophecy must revive, and a prophet of repentance in the spirit and power of Elijah appear, as the messenger of "the Eternal" before the glorious times will come. Thus with the advance of the spiritual element of the Messianic ideas the messenger who leads to repentance takes the place of the external chastisement which prophets before the exile threatened as a necessary preparation for the Messianic age. After the way is thus prepared, Malachi predicts that "the Eternal whom ye seek will suddenly come to his temple,"¹ reminding us of Haggai's prophecies of the glory of the new temple,² and of the prophecy at the end of the Book of Zechariah that the Eternal would stand on the mount of Olives.³ This theophany is to be for judgment in its first intention; and yet the true people of God will be spared in the midst of it, and even blessed by it.⁴ Above all, the highest blessedness will be obtained by the subsequent and consequent sway of righteous-

¹ Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5.

² Zech. xiv. 4.

² Haggai ii. 7-9.

⁴ Mal. iii. 17.

ness.¹ Although there is no reference to the person of the Messiah in these prophecies of Malachi, they are thoroughly Messianic. The Jews did not connect the manifestation of the Eternal for judgment and mercy with the advent of the anointed King. But the thoughts of the two great events seem to have crossed and intertwined in the different pictures of the perfect times; and though we have no valid reason for identifying either "the messenger" or "the Eternal" with the Messiah of Hebrew tradition, we can discern in these prophecies promises which were elements of that great hope of Israel which could only be realised by the advent of the Christ.

V. *Daniel*. We have one more prophetic work to consider, the Book of Daniel—the great apocalypse of the Old Testament. It is not necessary to hamper the present inquiry with any discussion of the vexed question of the origin of this book. Whether it was written in the sixth century before Christ, or only in the

¹ Mal. iv. 2.

second, by the prophet whose name it bears, or by an unknown writer as one composition, or as the work of two or more authors, the most radical critic must agree with the most conservative theologian, that the book was in existence before the time of our Lord, and will not be inclined to dispute that the pre-Christian prophecies it contains are preserved to us in their integrity. All I wish to do now is to take the book as it lies before us, and look for any characteristic features of the great Messianic hope which it may contain.

The greatest impediments beset the interpretation of the other prophetic elements of the Book of Daniel, owing to the complex allegorical form in which they are presented ; and if the Messianic ideas were buried under an equal weight of imagery, the task of discovering them would be difficult in the extreme. But for the most part the latter are set forth in clear, direct language, so that whatever "views" we may have of the general historical pictures of the prophecies, we ought to be able to understand

the predictions of the final glorious future much more distinctly and certainly.

The chief value of these predictions lies in their bearing on universal history. The plain of the Euphrates—the centre of the old world—and not Palestine, is the stage on which they appear, and the course of vast and awful movements of kings and peoples is shown to lead on by sure steps to their final consummation. Dean Stanley describes the Book of Daniel as the first attempt at a philosophy of history, originating the method which has been followed in recent times by Herder and Lessing and Hegel.¹ It would be more correct to say with Roszmann that it is the first attempt at a *theology* of history.² The prophet is carried in rapid vision through the great epochs of the world's onward progress, and sees its events unrolled in order; not, however, in accordance with the scientific laws which it is the greatest achievement of the modern historian to detect and apply, but under

¹ Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. iii.

² Roszmann, "Die Makk. Erhebung," p. 45.

the immediate direction of the hand of God. As kingdom after kingdom rises and flourishes, wanes and falls, he reads a Divine purpose working on alike, through evil and through good, towards the establishment of a higher perfect kingdom.

The grand apocalypse repeats itself in various forms of vision and dream. The first revelation, strange to say, comes in a heathen king's dream, not in the vision of a Hebrew prophet.¹ Nebuchadnezzar sees the image of his famous dream, "great, and bright, and terrible," of mingled precious and base materials, smitten by a stone no human hands had hewn from the quarry, and broken to pieces like "the chaff of the summer threshing-floor," while the stone which smote it grows into a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. Daniel interprets the dream. The monstrous image stands for the successive monarchies of the world, with Babylon at their head. The mystic stone represents a kingdom to be set up by the God of heaven, which shall

¹ Daniel ii. 31-45

“break and consume all the kingdoms, and stand for ever.”¹ The aim and scope of the dream is to teach, on the one hand, the limited temporal character and the speedy failure of the great despotisms which were then spreading dumb terror through the nations; and, on the other hand, to predict a greater kingdom of the future, and to make known its Divine origin and its complete victory, its universal extent, and its everlasting duration.

As to the *character* of this wonderful kingdom, however, the dream is silent. In this respect the next recorded revelation is a decided addition to the lessons of the image and its fatal stone. To the heathen king, the most striking facts were the predicted doom of his own and all like despotisms, and the advent of a greater kingdom to be established by the God of heaven. It would be much if such a man could be made to see thus far into the designs of Providence so as to recognise approaching Divine judgment and final Divine victory. But it was to be expected that the inspired prophet would

¹ Compare Psa. cxviii. 22; Isa. viii. 14, ; xxviii. 16.

see deeper into the moral character of the days to come. In his first vision ¹ Daniel beholds four great beasts come up from the sea. First, one like a lion, eagle-winged ; then one like a ravenous bear ; then one like a leopard, four-headed, four-winged, swift to compass wide dominions ; lastly, a nameless monster, fiercely destructive. At length "The Ancient of Days" appears in awful majesty, to call the four great beasts to judgment. "After this," says Daniel, "I saw in the night visions, and behold [one] like a son of man ² came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."³

In the interpretation of this vision the four

¹ Daniel vii.

² This indefinite expression, "a son of man," not "the son of man," as in our Authorised Version, is the correct rendering of the original text.

³ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

beasts appear as four successive monarchies.¹ It does not concern our present inquiry to decide what particular monarchies are represented by these several emblems. We may take the winged lion for the Assyrian empire, the first great world empire recognised by history, tracing its origin up to Nimrod the mighty hunter, or we may understand it as the representative of Babylon ; and so with the other emblems, about which endless controversy is waged by the critics of prophecy. Whatever application we make of them in detail with relation to history, the important fact is that, as a series, they represent the great series of human monarchies. The last form, appearing in the likeness of "a son of man," clearly introduces us to the Messianic kingdom. It is not in harmony with the general drift of the descriptions to regard this as standing simply for the Messiah Himself—for the Messiah as an individual person apart from His kingdom ; but neither is it right to take it as an image of the Messianic kingdom, to the exclu-

¹ Dan. vii. 17.

sion of all reference to the King. It is rather an image of the great kingdom typified in the person of the King. I quite agree with those who urge that the vision must represent successive kingdoms rather than a mere succession of individual sovereigns.¹ It is not the person of Nebuchadnezzar nor the person of Alexander which is represented by one or other of the sea monsters, so much as the Babylonian and Grecian empires. Accordingly it is most reasonable to suppose that the character of the last great kingdom, as a whole, is symbolised by the human form that succeeds them. It is said, indeed, in the description of the vision, that to this mystic person will be given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,"² but the same prediction is repeated in the interpretation, and there it is applied to "the people of the saints."³ Therefore it is clear that these are closely identified with the appearance "like a son of man."

I cannot conclude, however, that we have no

¹ Drummond, "Jewish Messiah," p. 229.

² Dan. vii. 14.

³ Ibid. vii. 27.

reference to the Messiah in the vision. True, Messianic prophecy is a larger thing than the expectation of an anointed King, so that we may still have the prophecy while that special expectation is under an eclipse. But it is too much to say that this is the case in the present instance. The earlier kingdoms presented themselves in the persons of their kings—"these great beasts which are four, are four *kings*." ¹ What is more natural, when we consider the constitution of those terrible old tyrannies, in which the character of the whole government is as exact a counterpart of the temper and moods of the sovereign as the seal of its die? The brutality of the tyrant makes his rule a brutal thing. It must be by the higher human character of its king, if the last and greatest kingdom is to have a higher character. The rise of a new kingdom was never regarded in our modern way as a progressive movement of peoples, but always as the triumph of some one famous conqueror. It is not true to ancient Eastern thought to regard

¹ Dan. vii. 17.

the coming of "one like a son of man" as only a foreshadowing of the progress of the purified Jewish nation. The image of the future king must blend with the image of his kingdom, as one implies the other. The kingdom would never have been thought to have its great success unless this were made for it by the success of some one founder of equal greatness.

Now when we come to look further into the meaning of this prophecy, we must not forget that the beautifully simple name, consecrated to us for ever by our Lord's application of it to Himself, was not a recognised title of the Messiah in the Old Testament. This Messianic use of it points to a new thought in prophecy. Therefore the interest of the name centres in the meaning of it quite as much as in its application. In the language of the grammarians, the phrase belongs to *the predicate*. The significance of the human likeness is the very essence of the prophecy. In all respects the contrast between the four earlier kingdoms and the last kingdom is strongly marked. Those old monarchies assume

the form of monstrous brutes. The Divine kingdom is in human form. In appearance weaker than the earlier powers, reminding us of the prophecies which describe the modest appearance of the Messiah, it is in every respect more noble. It is higher in nature, as man is higher than the soulless animal world. It is more *humane*. The ferocious tyranny of the old kings was to give place to a milder, kindlier sway of the new king. The kingdoms differ in their origin. The four came from below, as the monsters came up from the restless sea : at the best, their origin is earthly. This last will come with its king from the clouds, and will be inaugurated by the "Ancient of Days." Its advent will be ushered in by an awful scene of judgment, the description of which calls to mind the many warnings of "the day of the Eternal" in the earlier prophets. As in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the kingdom which follows the limited temporal empires is described as universal and everlasting. How wonderfully comforting and sustaining must this thought of the

humane king and his kingdom have been to the oppressed Jews groaning under the cruel exactions of a barbarous ancient despotism! How beautifully does it describe by strong contrasting lights and shades the happy estate of the servants of the mild and lowly Christ, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light! This is the chief and most characteristic Messianic prophecy of Daniel, though repetitions of the same ideas appear in later visions.

Perhaps there is no portion of Scripture involved in more inextricable difficulties of interpretation than the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks in the 9th chapter of the Book of Daniel. Jerome confessed these difficulties to be insuperable. Since his day cart-loads of criticism have been piled around them, but the result has not been to render the meaning of the passage more accessible. Innumerable questions have been suggested. Do the 70 weeks represent ordinary weeks of days (equivalent to one year and four months), or weeks of years (amounting to 490 years)? If they stand for weeks of years, when

do they begin?—with the conquest of Jerusalem by the Chaldæan army (B.C. 606), or with the edict of Cyrus (B.C. 536), or with the return to Jerusalem sanctioned by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign (457 B.C.), or with the mission of Ezra in the twentieth year (B.C. 445)? Having settled our starting-point, new questions meet us as we proceed to the division of the time. The division into 7 and 62 weeks, mentioned in the 25th verse, is so obscure, that no certain sequence of events can be made out of it. The Messiah there predicted may be coming at the end of 7 weeks or of 69 weeks, according to the method of punctuation we choose to adopt. Again, in this verse we read of “a Messiah, a Prince”—(not “the Messiah, the Prince,” as the passage is incorrectly rendered in the English Version)—who is to come after 7 or after 69 weeks, and in the following verse “a Messiah” who is to be “cut off” after 62 weeks. Leaving out of account the vexed question of dates, the passage is still confessedly difficult. Do the words “a Messiah, a Prince,” in the

25th verse, stand for the same person? and is he the same as the Messiah of the 26th verse, who is to be "cut off"? Is the Messiah of one or both passages the great Messiah of prophecy? or in the one case Cyrus and in the other Seleucus IV., who was "cut off" after a twelve years' reign by Heliodorus? or Onias III., the high priest murdered by Andronicus? In favour of the interpretation which applies the whole passage to *the great* Messiah, it is urged that the name "Messiah" was now consecrated to this exalted meaning; that the word translated "a Prince" was never used for any king of the high rank of Cyrus, but only for small noblemen and officials; and that the emphatic references to the name of a Messiah suggest more important transactions than the death of Seleucus or of Onias. But on the other hand it must be remembered that Cyrus is called a Messiah elsewhere.¹ If the title of prince is too humble for the Persian king, it could scarcely be considered more appropriate for the Messiah, for whom a far greater destiny

¹ Isa. xlv. 1.

was promised. Above all, the two indefinite references to *a* Messiah are inexplicable if *the* one great Messiah of earlier prophecy were intended.¹ Without attempting any positive solution of these knotty points, I can only indicate what appears to me the most probable explanation. After 49 years a Messiah, a Prince, is to come. 434 years later the street and wall will be rebuilt in troublous times. Then another Messiah will be killed.

Returning to the 24th verse, however, we light upon the unquestionably Messianic element of the prophecy. After 70 weeks — *i.e.*, probably 490 years — there is to come “the end of sins, the reconciliation for iniquity, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness.” The phrase “reconciliation for iniquity” is a technical expression, which a Jew would at once associate with his laws of sacrifice and atonement.² Its association with the Messianic ideas suggests to us the similar doctrine of the

¹ See Davidson, “Introduction to the Old Testament,” vol. iii. pp. 213–226, and excursus on the 70 weeks in the Speaker’s Commentary, vol. vi. pp. 360–365.

² See Lev. v. 8; xix. 22; Psa. lxxv. 4; lxxviii. 38.

atoning sufferings of the servant of the Eternal in the great prophecy of the restoration.¹ The idea of everlasting righteousness is a well-known trait of the higher and more spiritual pictures of the Messianic era.²

The most remarkable addition to these prophecies is a distinct emphatic prediction of the resurrection of the dead revealed to the prophet by an angel—"and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."³ Earlier prophecies had prepared the way for this great revelation. David had expressed a confident hope that he should not be delivered over to the dismal realm of Sheol—a hope which did not include the expectation of the resurrection, and yet which expressed so deep a yearning for continued life, and so strong an assurance that God would preserve him from corruption, that nothing short of life beyond the grave could satisfy it.⁴ Isaiah had emphatically

¹ See Isa. liii.

² See Ibid. xlv. 13; li. 5; liii. 11; Jer. xxiii. 6; Mal. iv. 2.

³ See Dan. xii. 3.

⁴ See Psa. xvi. 10.

predicted that death should be swallowed up in victory.¹ In a famous passage in the Book of Job, the doctrine of future retribution and the vindication of the innocent after death cast some brightness over the shadowy abode of departed spirits.² But now, for the first time, the belief in a resurrection is fully formulated—this is more than a belief in a future existence of rest and sleep, and more than a belief in a future retribution and judgment: it is a belief in *eternal life*.³

Kuenen charges these predictions with being too material—with not attaching sufficient importance to the moral element of the Messianic

¹ See Isa. xxv. 8.

² See Job xix. 25-27.

³ For an interesting discussion of the relation of the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection to the Magian doctrine, see Nicolas, "Doctrines Religieuses des Juifs," p. 341 *et seq.*, where it is clearly demonstrated that although the development of the doctrine of the resurrection among the Jews was probably modified and promoted by their intercourse with Persia, still the Jewish doctrine differs so decidedly from the Persian, and the history of the former is so plainly marked by gradual steps of evolution and growth from within, that the theory of wholesale importation is entirely excluded. "Il y a là," says M. Nicolas, "un travail de formation qui exclut toute idée d'emprunt, dans le sens exact du mot." For a comparison of the two doctrines see also excursus in Speaker's Commentary, vol. vi. pp. 360-365.

glory. But the design of the whole book differs from that of ordinary prophecy. Other prophets were preachers of repentance, because it was their mission to rouse the people from carelessness and moral corruption. Daniel is represented as one of the Magi, though a Jew : his aim is philosophical rather than ethical and religious. The prophecies of the Book of Daniel are intended to set forth the great events of history in their moral relations. They are not concerned with the characters of individuals and motives of conduct. Yet the writer does refer to the moral and spiritual features of the future, when he predicts "the end of sins, the reconciliation for iniquity, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness."¹

We have now come to the end of our survey of the history of the development of Messianic prophecy. As we glance back over the wide field of the Old Testament history, we see how these predictions, from many ages and many minds, blend in one rich variegated picture of the

¹ Dan. ix. 24.

future, each prophet seeing his own section of the great vision, none able to embrace the whole of it; some following close on the footsteps of their predecessors, others striking out fresh paths and throwing light on new tracts of the prophetic wonderland. The prophecies vary with the temperament and surroundings of the prophets. They change in form from age to age. Now the special Messianic hope of the great king is in the foreground, and then it falls into the shade or is quite left out of account. But on the whole there is a wonderful continuity and persistence in the stream of prophecy which flows down the ages of Hebrew history, swelling in volume and deepening in intensity, sparkling and freshening again and again, as it is enlivened with the breath of the spirit of love and irradiated with the beams of eternal light. No words can describe the glory and the beauty, the grand perfection and the sweet comfort, of that marvellous age of which prophet after prophet came forward to utter some fresh prediction. Plato's model "Republic" and Sir Thomas

More's "Utopia" are cheerless and uninviting beside this ravishing dream of the future. Even St. John's inspired vision of the New Jerusalem, and Dante's poetic descriptions of the bliss of the great central rose of heaven, do not promise more blessedness than these prophets portrayed, often as hovering just beyond their horizon, but always as certain to be enjoyed in this weary world at the fitting time. Was their vision of the goodly land of futurity only an illusory mirage, or was it a true prophecy? This is the question we have now to ask as we come to consider the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy.

***THE FULFILMENT OF MESSIANIC
PROPHECY.***

ἱεροῦσι δὲ τὰδε ὅτι θυτῶ διακείμενος ὁ δίκαιος μαστιγώσεται, στρεβλώσεται, δεῦσεται, ἑκανθησεται τωφθαλμῷ τελευτῶν πάντα κακὰ παθὼν ἀνασχιδυλευθήσεται.—PLATO, τῶφθαλμῷ.

Le monde ayant vieilli dans ces erreurs charnelles, JÉSUS CHRIST est venu dans le temps prédit, mais non pas dans l'éclat attendu ; et ainsi ils n'ont pas pensé que ce fût lui. Après sa mort, Saint Paul est venu apprendre aux hommes que toutes ces choses étaient arrivées en figures ; que le royaume de Dieu ne consistait pas en la chair, mais en l'esprit ; que les ennemis des hommes n'étaient pas les Babyloniens, mais leurs passions ; que Dieu ne se plaisait pas aux temples faits de main d'homme, mais en un cœur pur et humilié ; que la circoncision du corps était inutile, mais qu'il fallait celle du cœur, &c.—PASCAL.

IX.

THE FULFILMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

WHEN we open the volume of history to look for the realisation of the hope of Israel, there is one, and only one, professed fulfilment of Messianic prophecy which claims any serious attention. In the first century of the present era Jesus Christ appeared by the side of other claimants to the Messianic honour ; and some who rejected all their claims still expected the advent of the true Christ. But history has made it abundantly apparent that none of the pretenders who preceded and followed our Lord could have been the Messiah. Nor can any sane man believe that in later times a Messiah has come or a Messianic age dawned upon the world. The conservative Jews of our own day admit this, and they are

still looking for the appearance of the Messiah, who, according to the teaching of some of the rabbis, is hidden from them on account of the sin of Israel.¹ In the region of history there is no dispute between the claims of a Christ and the claims of an antichrist. Either Jesus is the Messiah and the Christian era the Messianic age, or neither Messianic age nor Messiah have yet appeared. Thus the question of the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy is now narrowed down to the one inquiry—What relation do Christ and the Christian Church bear to this prophecy?

I. When our Lord appeared the Messianic hopes had recently become very intense and very widely cherished—especially among the lower classes. They had fallen out of notice under the Asmonean princes, but during the last year of the Jewish state they were aroused to a new and powerful activity. The zealots in particular seized upon them with fanatical

¹ This is the teaching of Rabbi Elia in Tract. Sanhedrin in the Babylonian Talmud.

fervour: it was the belief in Israel's glorious future destiny which roused these men to action and sustained them in the midst of the fiercest struggles. The Evangelists plainly imply that there was a general expectation of the advent of the Messiah and the opening of the new age in their own day.¹ In the Gospel of St. John it is distinctly asserted that this hope was shared by the Samaritans.² But we are not confined to Christian sources of information. Josephus, in his dry, matter-of-fact way, adds his testimony to the almost fanatical expectation on the part of the Jews "of some one from their country who should obtain the empire of the world."³ So far had the hope spread that the Roman writer Suetonius drew attention to it in a well-known passage in his life of Vespasian. "There had been," he says, "for a long time all over the East a notion firmly believed that it was in the fates that at that time some one who came out of Judæa should obtain the empire of

¹ *E.g.*, see Mark x. 47; xi. 10; Luke iii. 15; John i. 19-24.

² *Ibid.* iv. 25.

³ Josephus, *De Bell.* vi. 5.

the world.”¹ Tacitus also considered this rumour of sufficient importance to be recorded in his history.² There is reason to believe that it first found its way to Rome by means of the famous Sibylline oracles. There can be no doubt that the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil is founded on the Third Book of Sibylline writings, as this, in its turn, is evidently founded on the prophecies of Isaiah.³ The pagan form of these writings of the Alexandrian mystics, added to their true poetic fervour, must have made them more acceptable to the heathen world than the confessedly Jewish literature. But if “poets at Rome and peasants in Syria were wound up to the expectation of some hero of Palestine, who would restore the supremacy of the East,” chiefly through the influence of these mystical vaticinations of the Sibyls, the Jews, for whose especial benefit the hopes of the future

¹ Sueton. Vesp. 4.

² Tacit. Hist. v. 13.

³ This shows that if, with Neander (“Life of Christ,” § 19), we concede that the allusions to the Eastern hope found in Tacitus and Suetonius may have been imitated from Josephus, the Messianic ideas of the Jews had reached Rome by other channels.

glory were to be realised, must have grasped them with the greatest eagerness, since they came to the Jews in innumerable promises, speaking out of the whole volume of ancient prophecy, and echoed in later apocryphal works, from the Book of Enoch to the Fourth Ezra. At the time of John the Baptist a new prayer was added to the Jewish ritual for the re-establishment of the royal dynasty.¹

It appears, indeed, that in the days of our Lord the hope of the Messianic king was not held so firmly in the schools of theology and by the governing classes as among the common people, although many of the learned and aristocratic who rejected the more popular hope of the personal deliverer still cherished the vision of the ideal future. The Jewish community at Alexandria was taught by the philosopher Philo to expect the sudden reformation of Israel and the return of the scattered to their fatherland—"led by an appearance² more Divine than the natur-

¹ See Ginsberg on the Synagogues, in Kitto's Cyclopædia, vol. iii. pp. 906, 907.

² Ὁψιως.

ally human, invisible indeed to others, and manifest only to those who are being saved."¹ It is probable that the Logos is here referred to. But Philo nowhere identifies the Logos with the Messiah of prophecy, and nowhere expresses his belief in the future advent of any such Messiah. Neither does Josephus express any faith in the expected Messiah. It may be that, as Dr. Liddon says, such men were influenced by "a cowardly unwillingness to avow startling religious beliefs in the face of keen heathen critics."² But it is more likely that they had abandoned the beliefs of which they give no indication. In a previous age the two great historical Books of Maccabees, and the noble philosophical Book of Wisdom, afford no trace of the hope of the Messiah. Now we find the two leading historical and philosophical writers of the later age abandoning the expectation. It was among the home Jews—the peasants and townsmen in Palestine—that it was most surely held. Even

¹ Philo, "De Execrationibus," 9.

² Dr. Liddon, "The Divinity of our Lord," 2nd edit. p. 91.

the orthodox centres of tradition were not untouched by doubt. It is said that when Rabbi Akiba acknowledged the Messiahship of Bar-Cochba, Rabbi Yochanan ben Toretha said to him, "Grass will grow on thy cheeks, and the son of David will not have come."¹

While the definite expectation of the Messiah was thus less general than the more vague hope of a glorious future time, a great prophet appeared, who was as earnest in promising the near advent of the kingdom of heaven in the person of the Messiah as he was stern in rebuking the false security and comfortable assurance of good times to come, irrespective of the needful preparation of repentance and moral reformation. It is too much to say with Schleiermacher that it was the work of John the Baptist "to revive the *forgotten* idea of the Messiah."² But there can be no doubt that it was his mission to bring this idea to its right place at the head of the national hopes. At the same time it is clear

¹ Jer. Ta'anith, iv. 8 (5 in the modern editions), quoted in Drummond's "Jewish Messiah," p. 273.

² Schleiermacher, "Christliche Sittenlehre," p. 19.

that many who did not 'listen to the prophet of the Jordan shared in the general revival of sanguine anticipations.

On the other hand it is apparent that among the people generally the great national hopes had now sunk into a most degraded condition. They had become gross and narrow. Some of the more educated classes who were better acquainted with the ancient Scriptures may have preserved purer notions. In Philo there is certainly little that is gross or sensuous, as his system of philosophy rather led him to explain the most clear literal statements of earthly prosperity as abstract and ideal conceptions. Here and there some rare spirits, like Simeon and Nathanael, may have cherished the purer spiritual ideas of redemption and its fruits in "the knowledge of the Eternal" and the reign of righteousness, but the mass of the people, led by their teachers the rabbis, seem to have lost all thought of these higher Messianic blessings. They allowed themselves to be absorbed with the one passionate expectation of an earthly

ruler who was to break the heavy yoke of Rome, exalt the throne of David, restore the national glory of Israel to more than its pristine vigour, and found a world-wide kingdom, of which Jerusalem should be the centre, and in which the Jews should enjoy their revenge, and exchange the ignominy of servitude for the pride of conquest. The most grotesque pictures of the material prosperity of the Messianic age were accepted without question, and quite superseded the quieter representations of reasonable perfection. The greater the nonsense the more popular did it become. The rabbis, going in the opposite direction to Philo, not content with taking the metaphorical language of Scripture in its bare and literal sense, thought this flat and tame, and set to work to overlay it with the grossest exaggerations in their paraphrases and commentaries. The growth of this corrupt tendency may be traced through the apocryphal literature. The Sibylline writings do not transgress the limits of good taste in describing the prosperity and peace of the future ; but in the

Book of Enoch this ridiculous hyperbolical style flaunts itself, in defiance of all sense and taste, and in the Apocalypse of Baruch it is expanded to huge dimensions. Thus we read: "The earth shall yield its fruits, one producing ten thousand; and in one vine shall be a thousand branches, and one branch shall produce a thousand grapes, and one grape shall produce a measure of wine."¹ If in Scripture we read that "there shall be a handful of corn in the earth," &c.,² the rabbis teach that the passage meant that the wheat will literally tower up as a palm-tree, and will rise above the height of the mountains. If reference is made in the Old Testament to "the fat of the kidneys of wheat," the rabbis interpret this as a promise that "the time will come when a grain of corn will be as large as two kidneys of the largest ox."³

II. When the atmosphere was thus electrified by a revival of the Messianic hope in its most corrupt form, and the more patriotic sections of

¹ Baruch xxix.

² Psa. lxxii. 16.

³ For other instances, see Mr. Drummond's "Jewish Messiah," book ii. chapter xx.

the nation were feverish with the excitement it occasioned, Jesus appeared, and claimed to be the Messiah of prophecy. How did He sustain this claim? The most conspicuous fact in the life of our Lord, as it appeared to His contemporaries, was His failure to satisfy the Utopian dreams of the nation. We do injustice to the Jews when we judge them from our later Christian vantage-ground. No doubt they ought to have had more spiritual Messianic ideas with the teaching of the great prophets in their hands, just as our modern prophets ought to have more spiritual views of the millennium with the teachings of the New Testament before them. And when Jesus did appear they ought to have examined His claims without prejudice, just as modern Christians ought to examine the teachings of the New Testament without allowing their minds to be warped by the prepossessions of a sectarian education. But with the Messianic ideas they then cherished the Jews could not have welcomed Jesus as the Messiah. Either they must have revolutionised their

opinions or they must have rejected our Lord. The Jewish Christians did the former. The great mass of the nation followed the easier course, and retained their prejudices at the expense of their Christ. Nothing is more certain than the fact that Jesus was not the Messiah expected by His contemporaries, unless it be the fact that He never aimed at becoming such a Messiah. When He began His public life the people were favourably disposed to Him. There were two distinct classes in His first disciples. There were the disciples who were attracted by His spiritual teaching—men who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, though even they were not without the delusions of the lower Messianic hopes. There was also an entirely distinct class—the “patriots,” who followed Him chiefly on account of political motives, although they may not have been quite impervious to the wonderful charm of His spiritual mission.¹ These political adherents received nothing but discouragement from our Lord. For a while

¹ This distinction is well worked out in “Philochristus.”

they vainly tried to urge Him to take active measures in the instigation of an insurrection. But when He rejected their advice, and seemed to be satisfied with His quiet work of healing and teaching, they gradually grew more and more disaffected, until at length they renounced their allegiance in bitter disappointment. If He had attempted to be the political Messiah they expected, there can be little doubt but that the great body of the Jewish nation would have crowded round the standard of revolt, and hailed Him as the second and greater David. When He worked against the prejudices they hoped He would confirm, their wistful friendliness was soured to rancorous hatred. If He had been the Messiah of popular opinion, they would have crowned Him. Because He was not this Messiah, they crucified Him.

But, paradoxical as it may appear, this very fact, which was the Jews' excuse for rejecting Jesus of Nazareth, is our great reason for accepting Him as the true Messiah. I cannot but think that if it were rightly regarded, it would

be recognised as a rock on which every attempted explanation of Christianity which denies its claim to be the true realisation of the hope of Israel must break. When the claims of Christianity are rejected there are two ways in which an explanation of its origin is attempted. Either a non-Messianic interpretation is put on the events of the gospel history, while these events, in the main, are allowed to have happened, or the gospel history itself is resolved into a myth.

III. The first explanation was maintained by the earlier opponents of Christianity. According to this, our Lord must be classed with Bar-Cochba and other false pretenders to the Messianic honour. He was either an enthusiast who deluded himself into a belief in His Messianic vocation, or an adventurer who deliberately employed the national hopes as a ladder for His own ambition. It is difficult to state such a theory as the latter without a shock to our deepest feelings of reverence. The coarseness of mind of those who could believe in the

main incidents of the gospel narratives, and yet so utterly fail to recognise the purity and majesty of the character of Jesus, almost puts them beyond the reach of ordinary reasoning. Moreover, it is apparent that the position which our Lord assumed in relation to the Messianic hopes of His time flatly contradicts these shallow theories of His life and labours. Not only was He not the Messiah His contemporaries expected, but He never attempted to become such a Messiah, and He repeatedly resisted every effort on the part of His followers to raise Him to the position of the expected king. Is it not inconceivable that a pretender would refuse to receive the honours he professed to claim when they were thrust upon him? If Prince Charles, after marching south at the head of his devoted band of adherents, had refused to strike a blow for his cause, or even to signify his willingness to accept the crown in case the British nation had offered it to him spontaneously, would not this conduct have been an unmistakable proof that he had renounced his

pretensions, or that he could never really have held them? Evidently our Lord had some great original designs of His own which were quite incomprehensible to the patriots who were looking for a political agitator. His rejection of the political *rôle*, and His fidelity to the higher task which led to His death, are plain proofs that He cannot be classed with the "pretenders," who must have moulded their designs on the Messianic ideas of their times.

IV. The second attempted explanation of Christianity to which I referred is "the mythical theory." Must not this also fail before the same difficulty? The story of the life of Jesus, as narrated in the Gospels, is treated as a myth which grew up around the much simpler events of His real life, under the influence of the fervid hopes and wild beliefs of the age immediately succeeding that in which He lived. Thus the narrative, as far as it is Messianic at all, is regarded as an unconscious product of the Messianic ideas. But if so, must it not closely resemble those ideas? In this case the effect must

resemble the cause, because it is nothing else than the cause itself clothed in an objective form. The myth is simply a concrete presentation of an abstract subjective idea. Now the tendency of myth-growing is never to exalt the ideas out of which it springs, but invariably to degrade them. It is a backward tendency, by which the higher ideal descends to the form of the lower real. It is contrary to the testimony of history, as well as to the constitution of the human mind, that a myth should present the ideas out of which it has grown in a higher form than that which belongs to them in their abstract condition. Yet it is admitted that the gospel narratives do present higher and more spiritual Messianic ideas than those which were prevalent among the Jews in the last days of Judaism. The process of myth-growing would have allowed the purer Christian truths to degenerate into a Jewish myth of an earthly Messiah. It would never have allowed the lower Jewish conceptions to develop into the higher ideas which are embodied in the Gospel narratives.

V. But what position did our Lord assume in relation to the ancient hope of Israel when He claimed to be the Messiah? It is maintained by some that He conceived a higher aim than that of the Messianic hopes of His time, but that He employed these hopes as a means towards the furtherance of His more spiritual mission. If the supporters of this theory mean that Jesus Christ did not intend to satisfy their hopes, while He adopted them for the encouragement of His followers, are they not charging Him with deliberate deceit? He could only have been throwing dust in the eyes of His friends, hoodwinking them, blinding them to His real intentions, and never attempting to accomplish the apparent intentions which He led them in their simplicity to accept as genuine. Can we ascribe such actions to the Jesus of the Gospels? They would make His whole life one huge falsehood, and yet there was no duty which He more solemnly urged than the duty of fidelity to truth. In this deceit He could have had no selfish aims, but must have been actuated by the purest motives—the good of His

disciples and the spread of the highest form of religion. How can we believe that He lived and laboured and died a martyr to the cause of truth and righteousness, and all the while maintained this cause by means which would have shocked the conscience of a Jesuit and rivalled the cynicism of Machiavelli?

But there is another form in which this theory may be presented. It may be said that our Lord adopted the Messianic ideas of His day, and laboured to teach His disciples a higher and better way of realising the hopes they suggested than that to which the popular opinion was directed, and then made it His life's work to satisfy them in this purer form. If we state it thus, we are not casting any shadow on the truth and purity of our Lord's life and character. But this is equivalent to saying that our Lord did come to fulfil the Messianic prophecies. If His interpretation does really contain all that is essentially valuable in them, and if He also accomplished His designs respecting them, He must have been the true Messiah; and if His larger in-

interpretation of the Messianic predictions was realised, the Christian era must be recognised as the Messianic age.

VI. We have now to ask, What was the interpretation which our Lord gave to the Messianic hopes? Was it one which really preserved their valuable elements? and, further, Is this realised and accomplished in Christianity?

The chief characteristic of our Lord's interpretation of the Messianic ideas may be given in one word—it was *spiritual*. Jesus lived to fulfil prophecy as He lived to fulfil the law. He said He “had not come to destroy the law or the prophets,” but to fulfil them.¹ He fulfilled the law because He carried its germinant imperfect truths on to perfect development; because He penetrated beneath the outward ordinance to the inner principle; because He cast aside the temporal ritual in favour of the eternal spirit; because He enlarged the narrow rules and maxims of Judaism and merged them in the infinite laws of the spiritual universe. His fulfilment of prophecy must be looked for

¹ Matt. v. 17.

in the same direction. This prophecy was vastly more spiritual than the coarse, degraded pictures of the apocrypha on which the prevalent Messianic conceptions were formed ; therefore our Lord drew the attention of His disciples to the true meaning of it. Most of it was more spiritual than the law, because it represented a later epoch of revelation, and therefore Jesus based His teaching more on the prophets than on the law. Nevertheless, prophecy itself was less spiritual than the religion of Jesus, because it did belong to the Old Testament religion and the Jewish dispensation. Our Lord went back from the sensuous comments of tradition to the more spiritual word. He did more. He drew from that word its most spiritual truths, and raised these to higher stages of development, while he cast aside much of their external garb as of no permanent interest. Thus if Christianity be indeed what it professes to be, it is the fulfilment, and more than the fulfilment, of prophecy on its spiritual side. It contains the predicted truths of prophecy, and more than

these truths, just as the living plant contains the life, and more than the life, of the seed ; just as the day contains the light of the dawn and more light. Prophecy is the seed, the twilight glow. Christianity is the life, the full day. It is not simply the objective embodiment of the subjective ideas of prophecy ; it is the enlargement of those ideas themselves.

We have seen how the prophecies were not fulfilled in their concrete historical relations in the way anticipated by the prophets. The golden age was looked for at the exodus, at the foundation of the monarchy, at the restoration ; but it came with none of these events. The Messiah was repeatedly expected to come in the near future ; but neither David, nor Solomon, nor Uzziah, nor Hezekiah, nor Zerubbabel, nor Judas Maccabæus, nor any other of the princes and kings of Israel, was able to maintain the Messianic character. Our Lord showed not only that it was a mistake to look for the Messiah and the Messianic age in connection with these men and events, but that it was an error to suppose

that they would come in this form at all, with a ruler sitting on a visible throne and exercising temporal sovereignty. "The kingdom of heaven is already among you," He said to those who looked for the signs of its material presence, and failed to recognise its spiritual presence in their midst. Jesus introduced the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah, and with it a radical revolution of all the hopes and dreams of 'Israel. The kingdom was to be unseen, in the heart; the blessings were to be, first of all and chiefly, the eternal blessing of righteousness and peace, and all the true fruits of the Spirit; the king was to reign in accordance with this character of his kingdom by moral and spiritual power.

To many minds the *spiritual* is equivalent to the *unreal*. But is not this spiritual fulfilment of prophecy itself the real and the most real fulfilment of all that was valuable in it? Jesus took up the idea of kingship; He asked what was the heart and essence of it, and He peeled off all the external forms as so many useless excrescences, and so got at the real thing. He saw that this

consisted in *rule* and not in the wearing of a crown. A man may receive regal honours and yet have no royal authority, like the *rois fainéants* of France, or he may exercise royal power without royal honours, like our own Oliver Cromwell. Therefore Christ flung aside the robe and the crown and sought to exercise true power. But further, He saw that the authority which is maintained by the sword is hollow and superficial. The subject who bows his knee to tyrannical force may be a rebel at heart. The truest and highest rule is that which sways the mind and conscience. Kings may attempt to hold their ground at the point of the sword, but to resort to such means of force is to confess that the essence of kingship is already lost. The true king can dispense with force as well as he can dispense with display, because he sits enthroned in the hearts of his people. He who thus reigns is the ideal, perfect King ; that is to say, He is the "Messiah."

Further, when we look at the character of Christ's rule, we see that it is the highest possible. Tyrants who reigned, like the Pharaohs, over

nations of slaves, and reigned only for their own glory, got through the misery of their subjects, degraded the idea of kingship, and basely abused it. The true king is, as Homer says, a father and shepherd of his people. All the prophecies of the Messiah represent Him as bringing peace and prosperity to His people ; but no prophet had ever imagined so grand a reign of self-sacrifice as that which Jesus sought to establish, ruling over the spirits of men for their highest good at the cost of His own rejection and suffering and death. Therefore, as the author of "Ecce Homo" shows, it is a mistake to say that when Christ called Himself a king He was speaking figuratively.¹ The royalty He claimed was substantial.

Is He not in this sense the one true, perfect King the world has ever seen ? We have not ended the matter when we have said that He claimed to be a King, for the history of Christendom confirms the claim and exhibits the fact of His kingship. It is no question of disputed doctrine,

¹ See "Ecce Homo," 14th edit. p. 26.

but a certain fact of history, that our Lord has exercised the most marvellous influence over men of all nationalities, and of every degree of mental and moral civilization ; and no one can fairly examine the fruits of this influence without coming to the conclusion that it has been beyond all reckoning for the good of mankind. It is difficult to speak of the wonderful influence of Christ in language which can do justice to it, and yet retain the appearance of strict sobriety. But it is no wild rhetorical conception, but a simple statement of fact, to say that this kingly power of Jesus of Nazareth has exceeded, and does still exceed, the most powerful personal influence which has been exerted by any man, not only in moral character, but also in intensity and in extent ; and this to a degree which raises it above all comparison. No emperors or conquerors, like Alexander and Napoleon ; no legislators, like Solon and Justinian ; no poets, like Homer and Dante ; no founders of religions, like Mohammed and Luther ; no men of the most powerful will or the most attractive magnetic

sympathies, can pretend to have exercised an influence upon the world which will bear one moment's comparison with the power by which Christ has swayed the hearts of multitudes in all ages, and moulded the institutions of society, and stamped the history of the world with His character and thought and will. Christianity is the most significant feature in modern history, and Christianity is just the outgoing of the spirit of Christ. The old prophet had never seen so intimate a connection between his Messiah and the Messianic kingdom as that which is maintained between Christ and Christendom. This fact is the unique characteristic of Christianity. Other religions are largely affected by their founders, but no religion has been thus centered in its founder. The relation which Christ bears to Christianity is wholly different from that which Moses bore to Judaism, or Sakya-Muni to Buddhism, or Mohammed to Mohammedanism. He was not simply the founder of Christianity, He was and is the life and soul of it. Christianity is faith in Christ, and loyalty

to Christ ; the worship of God in Christ, and the grace of God received through Christ. In a word, Christianity *is* Christ. Therefore the whole history of Christianity forms one long chain of testimony to the kingship of Jesus of Nazareth.

In the same spiritual, and therefore true and perfect way, our Lord fulfilled other Messianic prophecies. Thus, for example, David had predicted the Messiah as a priest "for ever after the order of Melchizedec." Jesus never attempted to expel the official priests from the temple and usurp their place ; He never offered sacrifices after the manner of the prophets ; but He penetrated to the very core of priesthood and sacrifice. He saw that these did not consist in the mere conversion of a temple into shambles. The true priest was he who spiritually interceded with the spiritual God for the sinful and the suffering. The true sacrifice was that set forth in the 40th and 50th Psalms—obedience and submission to the will of God. Therefore Jesus undertook this work

of intercession, and did the will of God in His life, and bore the will of God by submission even to death. In this He united the strangely contrasting ideas of ancient prophecy. The Targum of Jonathan had referred the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to the Messiah, showing that there must have been some Jewish ideas about a suffering Messiah before the time of our Lord. These were subsequently explained by the theory of a second subordinate Messiah, the son of Joseph or of Ephraim, who was to "bring blessing to Israel through his sufferings."¹ But the earliest reference to this second Messiah is in the Babylonian Gemara, and therefore in all probability it did not arise till after the time of our Lord, as the Babylonian Talmud was not collected until the seventh century. Though no one had been able to reconcile the ideal of sorrow with the ideal of kingship until Jesus lived and died, the reconciliation was effected in the life and death of our Lord, because He realised His kingship through His passion and death.

¹ See Dr. Payne Smith, "The Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah," p. 177.

Again, the highest characteristic of the Messiah of prophecy was his Divine nature, more or less clearly adumbrated in such prophecies as the 2nd and 110th Psalms, and the seventh chapter of Isaiah. It is quite beyond the scope of this inquiry to discuss any questions rising out of the great mystery of the divinity of our Lord. One point, however, I may notice. Christ displayed His divinity chiefly in moral and spiritual things. He did not uproot mountains and pluck the stars from their spheres to prove his supernatural power ; He did not anticipate the science of the nineteenth century, or foretell the history of the Victorian era, to show His supernatural knowledge. Even in His miracles the material power is subservient to the spiritual signification of the deeds, and throughout His life He revealed his divinity chiefly in His truth and purity and love. He manifested the spiritual God in a spiritual way, and revealed the God whose name is *Love* most clearly through His own surpassing love to men. Thus He not only fulfilled the prediction on its

spiritual side, but He developed and expanded this by His new and greater ideas of the nature and character of God.

These illustrations may be enough to indicate the true nature of the fulfilment of the prophecy which is realised in the personal life and character of Christ. If it is pursued throughout, I believe that not only will *all* the prophecies about the anointed son of David be found to get their accomplishment in the history of our Lord, but that a great many more prophecies, such as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which may not originally have been referred by the prophets to this Messiah of Jewish hope, will turn out to have met with that complete realisation in Christ which they never found in the persons and events to which they were first applied.

VII. But if Jesus be the Messiah, is the Christian the Messianic age? Did the reign of peace and prosperity come in with Christianity? Again, we must look for the answer to this question chiefly in spiritual things, not simply because the

material fulfilment has failed to come, but because the real peace and prosperity can only be found in these. The hungry bondsmen in Egypt thought they would be satisfied with a land flowing with milk and honey ; but experience taught the Jews that this was not enough, and the fuller Christian light has shown us that righteousness and inward peace and spiritual prosperity are really the highest blessings. These are enjoyed in Christianity, and the only limit of the enjoyment of them is the unwillingness of the Christian to yield himself up to the influence from which they flow. Nevertheless, though this internal redemption of character is the highest Messianic blessedness, the reign of Christ has produced external and visible fruits. At the time when our Lord appeared society was utterly rotten ; the old heathen religions were losing all power ; the great Jewish faith was frozen in formalism ; good and wise men, like Seneca, were proposing suicide as the best means to escape from the dreary misery of existence ; and an opinion was gaining ground that the end of

all things was at hand. Then Christianity gave a new life to the world. It not only restored the pristine vigour of society, it gave it such an impetus upwards and onwards that it made all past history look but as the preparation for the new and greater Christian era. By the elevation of women, the gradual overthrow of slavery, and the spread of philanthropy as a distinct duty almost unrecognised in pagan society, as well as by a thousand other subtle influences for good, it improved the peace and happiness of the outward condition of men and women. When it is allowed to work freely, its tendency is always to do this more and more. But we may descend to more material considerations. The human race may be divided into two great sections, the progressive and the non-progressive. The progressive nations are the Christian, the non-progressive nations are those which are not Christian. Further, I think it will be admitted that England, America, and Germany are among the most progressive nations, and that these are also about the most Christian. All Mr.

Buckle's ingenious arguments do not destroy the fact of this evident association between progressive prosperity and the reign of Christianity.

There is another remarkable feature of Messianic prophecy which is one of its leading characteristics, and which is also one of the leading characteristics of the fulfilment of prophecy by Christianity. Many prophets taught that foreign nations should share the blessings of the Jewish prosperity. Isaiah taught that all would be equal in this respect. So one of the most remarkable features of Christianity is its cosmopolitan character. Ex-cannibals of Fiji and philosophical Hindoos, stunted Esquimaux and vigorous Kaffirs, poor peasants and great princes, little children and men of experience, reformed criminals and pure-minded saints, have been able to unite on the common ground of Christianity, and find in Christ all that will satisfy their deepest needs.

VIII. We are now prepared to see what relation these views of prophecy and its fulfilment sustain to the evidences of Christianity. As I

said at the beginning, I think that too much attention has been paid to the supposed correspondence between the minute details of predictions and their fulfilment in history, and too little to the larger relations of prophecy to its accomplishment. Nevertheless, there is a remarkable testimony to Christianity in the mere fact of prediction. The great mistake of believers and unbelievers is in breaking the subject up into fragments. The true perspective of the history of prophetism, the mutual support of the several prophecies, and the testimony of their united utterances, are lost in this way. Pascal pointed out that the essential value of this testimony of prediction is in the character of a cumulative argument.¹ No one prediction may be conclusive, just as no one line in a portrait taken by itself can be pronounced as certainly referring to the original ;² but when we cease to wrangle about

¹ Pascal, "*Pensées*," ch. xviii.

² Mr. Greg's attack upon the evidences of prophecy ("*Creeds of Christendom*," vol. i. p. 72), is entirely based upon the fallacy of taking the prophecies separately and ignoring their mutual testimony. He takes the bundle of prophecy to pieces and then sets to work to break up the supposed evidence of the individual

the details of particular predictions, and stand back so as to look over the whole field of Messianic prophecy, I am convinced that we must discern a most wonderful likeness between the prophecy and its accomplishment. This is the more remarkable in the case of those prophecies the authors of which never intended any reference to the Messianic age, and yet which only find their true realisation in Christ. The testimony of the whole body of prophecy, in the converging lines which come from so many unlikely quarters, and centre and rest in Christ, is full and rich and comprehensive enough to convince us that this must have been inspired by the one great Spirit who is above and beneath all time, and sees the end from the beginning.

But there is another way of regarding the fulfilment of prophecy in relation to the evidences of Christianity. This is the New Testament method.

predictions. But in so doing he fails to account for the most remarkable fact connected with their history, viz., their natural association in one body of truth. And, consequently, he does not touch the most powerful evidence they afford to Christianity by the correspondence of the whole collection of Messianic prophecy with the whole body of Christian truth.

It is not generally noticed that the writers of the New Testament pursued an entirely different course from that of our modern evidence-writers. The modern evidence-writer starts with the facts of Christian history and the mere words of ancient prophecy, and compares the two together, in order to show such an agreement between them as must prove the prophecies to have originated in supernatural powers of foresight. What is this but using Christianity as a witness for prophecy instead of calling prophecy as a witness for Christianity? It has its bearings on Christianity, but they are indirect and secondary and subordinate to the authority of the older religion. Thus it is attempted first of all to establish the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets, and then, on the authority of this inspiration, to adduce the testimony of their writings in favour of Christ. The apostles never pursued this circuitous method. They started with the admitted inspiration of the older writings, and then proceeded to show that Jesus was the Christ because He accomplished the predictions contained in

them. Such an argument of course only holds good with those who, like the Jews, were believers in the Old Testament before they were asked to accept the New.¹ We are more likely to reverse this process, and accept the Old Testament on the strength of our previous faith in the Christian revelation. But there is one phase of this great argument of the apostles which is of lasting and general use. This is in the fact that Jesus did realise the predictions of the prophets. In the prophets we see the purest, wisest, noblest aspirations of our race for the coming of a sorely needed deliverance and the dawning of a brighter age on this weary world. In Christ these aspirations are satisfied. Surely this great fact, that Christ does satisfy the hopes and yearnings of the most spiritual men, is to us the most important thing to know when we compare the history of Christianity with the Messianic prophecies, and it is one of the highest evidences of the truth and divinity and eternal value of the Christian religion.

¹ *E.g.*, see Acts xxvi. 27.

IX. But *is* this satisfaction complete? Clearly with the Jew the fulfilment is at present very incomplete. Still it seems to me contrary to all the analogy of the Christian fulfilment of prophecy to look for the restoration of the modern Jew to Palestine as the natural accomplishment of the ends of Messianic prophecy. I do not deny that this may be included in them. But to put this forward as itself an important fulfilment of prophecy yet to be looked for, is to hanker after those material blessings which were found in the past to be always unsatisfactory. As the true fulfilment of prophecy for the Gentile is the spiritual, so must it be for the Jew. Without this fulfilment the external accomplishment would be vain and in every way disappointing. With this the external can be of little value. It is of great importance that the Jew should enjoy the spiritual redemption of Christ. But it is of little moment whether he sits as a member of the British parliament at St. Stephen's, or becomes a member of a restored Sanhedrim at Jerusalem.

Still we must freely admit that the golden visions of peace and blessedness are not yet fully realised in any part of the world. The savagery and brutality in which a large part of our race is still degraded, the wars and rumours of wars which distract the greatest nations, the dull misery of whole tribes of slaves, the great open sores of pauperism and disease and ignorance and crime which disgrace the most prosperous kingdoms, the foul flood of vice which flows through the streets of the most civilized cities, the fierce upheaval of tumultuous passion, the weary travail and the wistful, eager restlessness which characterise our age in the centres of highest advancement, are all mournful enough proofs that we are far from the millennium.¹ It was the mistake of the Jews that they expected a sudden and perfect accomplishment of all

¹ Seventy years ago St. Simon wrote: "Poets have imagined that the golden age existed in the infancy of the human race, amidst the ignorance and brutality of early times: it is rather the age of iron which should be placed there. The golden age is not behind us, but it is to come; it means the perfection of human society. Our ancestors never knew it, our children will arrive at it some day or other, and it is for us to strike out the paths."

prophecy at the advent of the Messiah. Our Lord taught His disciples that this must be gradual, like the growth of the mustard seed and the spread of the leaven, and that it could only be fully accomplished by His second advent. The belief in a second advent, indeed, has been described as a mere excuse for the failure of the first, and if this were to be looked for, as some people expect, suddenly and without any preparation for it, there would be some ground for such an objection. But it should be regarded as the consequence of the first advent. This did not fail : all that can be said is that it did not fulfil its promise suddenly. With the coming of Christ the fulfilment began ; all the tendency of Christianity is to carry on that fulfilment more and more ; and never in the past ages of Christianity did it progress so far as it has progressed in our own day ; for, in spite of the attacks of the keenest opponents, it is more energetic now than ever, and the fruits of its energy are invariably seen in some increasing measure of Messianic blessedness. In this living and expanding energy

we may discern the promise and potency of its future perfection. Thus in the present condition of Christianity we see that the seed of Messianic prophecy has germinated and borne some fruit, and is still growing continually, so that we have good reason to look for its perfect fulfilment in the final development of the Christian dispensation. Building on the assurance gained by the partial fulfilment of prophecy already accomplished, we may look forward beyond the anguish and travail of the present, in which the whole of creation still groans, to that final consummation and restitution of all things, when all men will know the Eternal from the least unto the greatest, and sin and death and hell will be utterly vanquished, and Christ will reign indeed, no longer the despised and rejected of men, but loved and worshipped by the whole world for which He died, as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

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